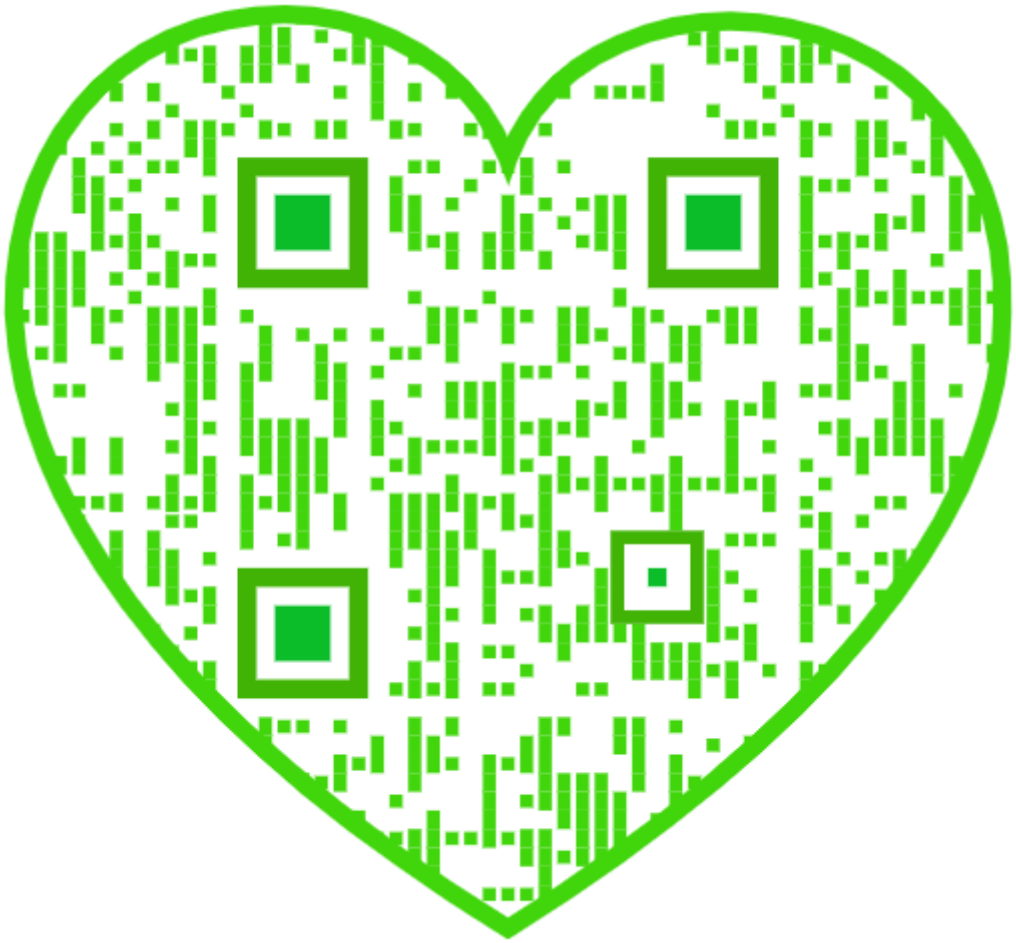
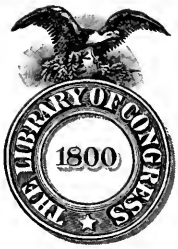
IN A FRENCH HOSPITAL

By

M. EYDOUX-DÉMIANS





Class D544
Book .E8E
1915

IN A FRENCH HOSPITAL

IN A
FRENCH HOSPITAL

Notes of a Nurse

BY

M. EYDOUX-DÈMIANS

TRANSLATED BY

BETTY YEOMANS

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
ADELPHI TERRACE

D544
.E82
1915a

Copyright, 1915, by Plon-Nourrit & Company
Copyright, 1915, by Duffield & Company

All rights reserved

215698
16

Press of J. J. Little & Ives Co., New York

TO

MY FIVE BROTHERS

WOUNDED IN THE SERVICE OF
FRANCE

NOTE

The only merit of these notes is their profound sincerity. They give only impressions of things actually seen and heard, reveal only the wonderful courage and devotion that exist to-day in a French provincial hospital.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Our Patients	1
Sister Gabrielle	8
One Night	15
From One to Another	20
Our Orderlies	25
When They Talk	30
How They Love in War Time	36
Their Pride	38
The Death of a Soldier	40
The Funeral	46
A Just Reflection	49
A Simple Story	51
Comrades	53
Engaged	60
Seen at the Railway Station	67
A First Communion	71
Conversation As It Is To-day	74
A Soldier's Compliment and Song	78
Always Suffering	83
Young Recruits and Territorials	84

PAGE

Under Martial Law 87
Our Priests 88
The Little Frenchmen 91
What We Receive from the Front . . 92
Correspondence in War Time 93
A Little Refugee 101
A Modest Little Soldier 106
Officers and Men 109
Sister Gabrielle's Office 112
The Company of the Audacious . . . 114
Memories 118
News from the Mèchins 139
A Lament 142
Some Letters 143
Sister Gabrielle's Christmas Tree . . . 159

IN A FRENCH HOSPITAL

OUR PATIENTS

On October sixth, last, I received a message from the directress of the Hospital of Saint Dominic, reading as follows:

"A large number of wounded have just arrived. We can't take care of any more ourselves, and the moment has come to call for volunteers. I shall expect your help."

One hour later, as you can easily imagine, I was at Saint Dominic. This specially privileged hospital is under the gentle management of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Several years ago some of its devoted trustees made one effort after another on its behalf in Paris, and, after overcoming many difficulties, reëstablished the Sisters of Charity amongst us once again. They had not a doubt even then that they were work-

ing in the interests of France's soldiers, those same soldiers whose faces light up now with such a special joy when they lie on their painful stretchers, and catch sight, near the large entrance porch, of the good white cornettes of the Sisters waiting for them.

With my heart beating fast I entered the room to which I had been assigned. There they all were before me, these lads that had undergone that terrible and fierce adventuring into war. I remember how they went away in our wonderful mobilisation trains, those make-shift, flower-bedecked trains that sped all of them to the same destination, the same region of glory and bloodshed. One long war cry seemed to rise up from them over all our land. Our young soldiers who went away in them had acquired an entirely new way of shouting "Vive la France." It was no longer as if they were on parade, notwithstanding all the flowers that people tossed to them: it was already the cry of men who were to lead in war's

assaults, and make the supreme sacrifice of their lives. I remember one little infantryman of twenty years, standing erect with folded arms in the back of his compartment, his eyes flashing, and all the muscles of his pale face taut. He kept repeating threateningly, "Vive la France—vive la France," without a look toward any one; saying it just to himself and for his country. And I felt that it was as if he said: "We shall get them: we must get them, no matter what it costs. As for me, well, you see, to begin with, my life doesn't count any more." This very fellow is the one, perhaps, who has come back now and sleeps here in this first cot, where a face both energetic and infantile shows in the midst of the blood-stained linen.

Sister Gabrielle made a tour with me of all the patients. The memory of certain of them particularly is fixed in my mind. There is number 3, here, who got a bullet wound in the region of the liver, and has

to lie absolutely still, lest an internal hemorrhage may occur at any moment. A warrior of twenty-three he is, with cheeks as rosy as a girl's, and clear blue eyes. He fought like a lion, they say, but here nothing could be gentler. His appreciation for the least thing that is done for him is touching. Number 8, little eight, as they call him, a volunteer, who seems about fifteen, and who has to live week after week propped on his right side, on a hard hospital bed, on account of an abscess following his wound. Number 12, an infantryman, who got a bullet in the left temple; it was extracted from his right maxillary, and in passing cut his tongue in two. "Everything has been put back," said the Sister, "but he can't talk yet, and he'll have to learn to talk all over again, like a little child. In taking care of him you must come every once in a while and see if you can guess what he wants." Number 17, a brave among the braves, who, under the enemy's fire, crawled ten kilo-

metres on his hands and knees, dragging his twice wounded foot behind him, to deliver an order that he had been charged with. His wounds cause him cruel suffering, and yet he seems illuminated as with some strange inward joy. Number 24, nicknamed the little sieve, because of his fifteen wounds. Number 32, who suffers like a real martyr. His leg was literally shattered by the fragments of a shell. It was a question whether it could be saved at all, but following the directions of the war surgeon, we are keeping up the attempt. Antiseptic injections are made twice a day as deep as the bone. Number 30, who has lost an eye and has two open fractures in his right arm. When I said to him: "You have given a good deal for France," he answered, "It's the least I could do." And he added, laughing, "I was so clumsy with my hands. This will teach me to be clever even with my left one."

Eloquent pens write every day of the heroism shown by our wounded soldiers, but

shall we ever grow tired of hearing this ever recurring *leit motif*, which in everything that touches on the tragic developments of 1914, sounds its incomparable song in praise of the moral qualities of France? One cannot repeat too often or too admiringly, "Our wounded." Our wounded, that is to say, those men who have come back from that hell, "whose horrors," they say themselves, "are indescribable"; those who have marched beneath "that terrible, moving curtain of iron," to which an officer compared the mass of balls and shells in battle, a mass so compact that it obscured the very daylight on the firing line. Our wounded! Those, in a word, who have brought back in their very flesh the frightful scars of the enemy's iron, those who have cemented with their own blood the human wall that is now our frontier. They have come back, not with their courage drained, broken down, horror-stricken, stunned—not at all. They forget themselves to talk smilingly of the great

hope in which we all share. They are touched, deeply touched, by the few hours of fatigue we undergo for them each day—for them who have given almost their lives.

My tasks were laid out for me, and I began work at once, thanked by the soldiers almost in advance for my trouble.

"It's a bit too much to see you work like this for us."

"All the same, no one has ever been served like this."

They are not a bit difficult, but pleased with everything, these men who suffer so much, who have such a right to every care. Alas, there are too many of them (this hospital alone has as many as a thousand) to permit of all the little comforting things that we should like to do for them without stint. The Sister who cooks is sorely driven, and even the prescribed dishes that she sends up for the sickest ones are often far from appetising. For instance, I have just taken Number 13, who is consumed by a lingering

fever (a bullet passed through his lung), a milk soup that smelt badly burned, and in which pieces of half-cooked rice floated round. I sighed a little about it as I put the napkin on the bed. Did he understand what worried me? In any case, he shows no distaste, and a quarter of an hour later, when I pass by him, he motions to me, and says gently, "It was delicious, madame."

That's the way they all are—all of them.

SISTER GABRIELLE

I STUDY with emotion the admirable vision of the human soul which the Sister of Charity and the wounded soldier set before me. It is a vision which has intervened always, as with an element of the supernatural, in our war-time pictures, and, behold, now we find it again, almost miraculously, in the supreme struggle of 1914.

Sister Gabrielle, who has charge of my room, her identity quite hidden as it is by

her archangel's name, is the daughter of a general, as I know. She has three brothers that have served beneath the colours. The oldest, a quite young captain, has just met his death on the field of honour. I happen to have learned the circumstances: how, covered with blood already flowing from three different wounds, Captain X nevertheless struggled on bravely at the head of his men, and after several hours of conflict was struck by a bullet full in the breast. He fell, crying: "Don't fall back! That's my last order!"

Sister Gabrielle was told only last week of the glorious grief that had been thrust upon her, but no one around her would have guessed her sorrow. Possibly her smile for the patients that day was a little more compassionate and tender than usual, when she thought of her brother enduring his moment of supreme agony alone down there in the forests of the Vosges. But no matter how compassionate Sister Gabrielle may be, she

never carries it to the point of feebleness or softness. Her bearing with the soldiers is an indefinable mingling of something angelic, maternal and virile, all at once. These men brought in from all points of the immense and terrible battlefield become at once her children (and never was a mother more watchfully solicitous and devoted), but never does she forget their sacred title of soldier. She must not stir up their feelings, she knows. She sets herself, on the contrary, the essential, secret task of keeping up their moral strength, of helping them, after the enemy's fire, to meet the ordeal of the operating room, the wearing suffering, perhaps at last even death; for death is always watching for its prey in this room of the twenty-four beds reserved for the most severely wounded.

Sister Gabrielle would like to save them all. What a task! What a struggle! She is on her feet night and day. The orderlies are told to call her at the least disturbing

symptom, and when they do, with true motherly enthusiasm, she who is always helping others to bear their heavy burdens, herself awakens, tireless, to her own sad duties. In the semi-darkness of the room she prepares hastily the serum that may prolong a life; she utters the sweet words that are dear to souls who suffer thus at night. It may be one o'clock, two o'clock in the morning, but when four o'clock sounds her night is over. Lost in the long line of white cornettes, she takes her way to the chapel, and there stores up for another twenty-four hours the strength to go on with this superhuman mode of living. Behold in her "a soul that is truly the mistress of the body which it animates."

She is thin and frail—mortally ill herself, they say; she was quite ill one month ago. But if you speak to her of her health she interrupts you a little impatiently:

"We have given ourselves, body and soul, according to our vows. To last a little

longer or a little less doesn't matter. The main thing is to fulfil our tasks. Besides," she adds, indicating her patients, "they have given their lives for France. It is quite right, if it must be so, that our lives be sacrificed to save them."

And, in truth, from living in this atmosphere one comes to think this mutual heroism the natural thing. These two kinds of heroes, the French soldier and the Sister of Charity, need make no explanations, coin no phrases to understand each other. There really exists between them, over and above the differences in class and lives, a real and touching intimacy of the soul. When Sister Gabrielle goes quietly and rapidly past the long rows of beds where they suffer so uncomplainingly, they know perfectly well that she hasn't time to stop before each one of them. She has not time to say the words which suffering seems so easily to call forth, but which may make it worse and cause it to be less nobly borne. They know, too,

that she will be there if her presence is necessary, and that if, in secret, her woman's heart weeps over them, weeps incessantly, in their presence her French woman's heart beats with pride.

To us, when they can't hear, she talks about "her children" freely, quite full of admiration and pity for them:

"Ah, if you knew how full of courage they are," she says. "You must be with them night and day, like me, to do them justice; to see them coming into the operating room so bravely, a smile on their lips, as they lie on their stretchers. You must see them die, too."

Sister Gabrielle's eyes filled with tears at the thought of so many young lives that have gone out—of so many yet to pass out, in her arms. This woman, young and frail as she is, truly must have some supernatural source of energy in herself, thus to bear up and never falter under the terrible weight of suffering that crushes her silent heart, this

suffering that tortures her soldiers in the flesh incessantly all about her.

The wounded soldiers are not clever at expressing their appreciation. But they know quite well that Sister Gabrielle can guess what they feel for her, just from the timid way in which they say, "Thank you," so many times, or the confiding way in which they give her their letters, or tell the news they've had from their families, or from the fervour with which they try to do a thousand little services for her as soon as they begin to get better; and especially from the respect, a very touching kind of respect, surprisingly full of delicacy, which they invariably show for her, even in the midst of their cruellest suffering.

In speaking to Sister Gabrielle they never use the trite phrases that they use to the other nurses, such as, "You'll tire yourself out; you're doing too much."

No, Sister Gabrielle is an immaterial being, to whom they don't dare attribute the

common feebleness of humanity. But watching her passing by, her clear eyes deeply ringed with fatigue, her step tired, but her bearing invariably gentle, I often hear them murmur, "She deserves a decoration."

ONE NIGHT

Better than all the newspapers and official communications on the war, the hospital keeps one in touch with matters at the front. In the lot of wounded that were sent in yesterday, forty came to Sister Gabrielle directly from the Aisne. They arrived toward the close of the day, and I shall never forget the spectacle of that room. One stretcher succeeded another, all borne slowly by the litter-men and set down near the hastily prepared beds. Here and there you caught a cry of pain that could not be kept in, though there were no complaints, no continued groanings. Yet now, when you lean over those glorious and lamentable blue bon-

nets, cut as they are by bullets and stained with the mud of the trenches, when you take off the caps that have grown stiff with the dampness of the long rains, you perceive their suffering by the glittering look in their fevered eyes, their poor, worn faces and ravaged features, sunken and hollow with suffering. Then, all at once, at the least word, the old gallantry that we know so well reasserts itself. For example, they ask the most touching and childish favours of us. Thus if a limb that hurts too much must be lifted, or a piece of clothing that binds a wound eased up, they all ask:

"Not the orderly, not the orderly, please; the Sister or the lady."

One must have given in little enough to suffering, have treated oneself rather roughly, after all, not to deserve now the gentle ministrations of women's hands. And certainly it is the least of our duties to be here and ready with this gentleness, as long as there is one wounded soldier left to look after, the

least of our duties to serve them till the final hush of victory descends at last on our terrible battlefields.

The first words that the newcomers exchange with their cot neighbours are not about their own hardships; they speak first, and before anything else, of France.

"How are things going down there?"

"All right. We'll get them."

Then the newcomers, worn out as they are, sink into feverish sleep, struggling sometimes for days between realities and the persistent nightmare of the visions that pursue them. That night in the room that was always so still, but that now seemed more feverish than usual, I heard a sound of smothered sobs. It was Number 25, a big, good-looking soldier, whom each day I had seen having his wound dressed, a real torture, without a word, and who was sobbing now with his head in his pillow, ashamed of his tears, but powerless to keep them back. I went to him and tried to question him, but

the soldiers don't readily speak to you of the sorrows that touch their hearts the deepest and most nearly.

"Thank you, lady; don't bother yourself about me. I don't need anything."

"Is your pain worse, maybe?"

"I'm in pain, yes, terribly, but it isn't that."

"What is it, then? Won't you tell me?"

He denied me still, then, all at once, under the pressure of his grief, he said:

"Oh, yes, I do feel like confiding in you. I'll tell you what it is. The comrade who was waiting next to me till his bed was ready brought me news of the death of my best friend. He was in his regiment and was killed by his side. Oh, madame, he was such a fine fellow, so devoted and full of courage. We were brought up together. He was more than my chum; he was my friend."

He cried and cried. He had borne everything without giving way—the continual nearness of death, the so hard life in the

trenches, the incessant physical suffering; but the death of his friend crushed him and brought him down to earth. And while I murmured words that, alas, were futile for any change they made in his sorrow, but which did some good, just the same, I heard him sobbing in his pillow:

"My friend was killed. My friend was killed."

His friend—when one knows what the word *comrade* means to them, one divines all that word friend may mean, too.

Sister Gabrielle, whose infallible instinct brings her alway to the cots where the sickest of her children are, passed near Number 25 and stopped a moment. She did not ask him anything. She just put her hand caressingly on his brown head, so young and virile, and said in her firm, sweet voice:

"All right, my boy, all right. Courage. Remember all this is for France."

Then turning to me, she said:

"Before night-time wouldn't you like to

play a game of dominoes with this good boy? He'll represent the French forces, and in the morning he must be able to tell me that he has won."

In the midst of his tears the young soldier, his heart swelling in his distress, smiled at finding himself thus treated like a child. They have such need of it, the soldiers, after having done so valiantly the work of men!

FROM ONE TO ANOTHER

It is comforting to hear them talk about their superior officers, as a soldier of the 149th Infantry has just talked to me about his captain.

"Oh, I can tell you, my captain had plenty of good blood in his veins. There was nothing suspicious about him. I saw him standing straight up among the whistling bullets, giving his orders without flinching, without recoiling one inch, as if he were sitting at his desk and only flies were buzzing round his

head. And so gentle, too. Good to the men and always jolly. We were in luck to have him over us."

I asked him questions about his campaign, and he talked freely, having only good things to tell. The taciturn ones are those who have sad memories to conceal.

"We were the ones told off to take the village of S——," he said, "where the enemy was. My captain, who acted as chief of battalion, got us all together, and said to us:

" 'There seem to be two or three Boches down there. We must get them out, eh?'

"Everybody knew very well what that meant, but we laughed and went to it in good part. What fights those were! Two days of bloody battles in the streets. Finally the village was ours. We had one night's rest in a farmhouse, three-quarters of which had been destroyed. When we got there we spied an unfortunate porker in a corner. He had taken refuge there, fright-

ened by the firing. He came in very handy, I can tell you, for our stomachs were hollow.

" 'Charge again on that Boche, there,' said the Captain. When we had eaten and slept and assembled again next day, he said:

" 'Well, well, my lads, we're in danger of getting too soft here. Suppose we go on a little further and see what's happening.'

"We marched on further, but the enemy, who were in force, began to shoot at us all at once from below. My Captain didn't expose us needlessly. He made us lie down in the deserted trenches. There were corpses there and dead horses, and water, water everywhere. It rained without stopping. We spent the night up to our waists in water. It was enough to make one laugh."

To laugh—this word turns up all the time in their recitals, and in the most unexpected manner. Oh, this French courage, which faces not only the bitter struggle with danger, but disdains and mocks it, too; that ele-

gant courage of our fathers that has been born again amongst us.

My foot-soldier, Number 149, was seized with quite a touching emotion when I told him that I knew his Captain's lady.

"Tell her she may be proud," he said, "and that I'd willingly go back down there; for my country's sake, of course, but also and a good deal, on my Captain's account."

Then I let him know something that I'd kept till the end of our interview, that his Captain, young as he was, had just been promoted to the rank of battalion chief; that the Cross of the Legion of Honour had been given him, and that, thanks to him, no doubt, the entire regiment had been mentioned in the order of the day. I won't attempt to picture the little soldier's moving and disinterested joy.

Near Number 3's bed I caught sight of a peasant woman from the Cher, in a white headdress, and an old man, who wore a medallion of 1870 on his breast.

"They are his parents," Sister Gabrielle explained to me. "I had word sent to them. The poor lad is in grave danger. Luckily I've got the management's permission to let the mother pass the nights here."

In this way I became acquainted with the Mèchins, French peasants of the old order, unalterably attached to the soil. They hope, nay, they are sure, that their son is going to get well. The sick man says nothing. They're all like that, our soldiers—no foolish tenderness, no pain given to their parents. Who knows, besides, how much their desire to live may have dwindled down after their tragic voyages to the frontier? The soul must possess new powers of detachment when it has risen to the heights of absolute self-sacrifice. The little soldier does not deceive himself, Sister Gabrielle has told me, and when I expressed my admiration for the strange moral force that he gave proof of, she answered me proudly:

"But they are all like that."

Just as I was going to leave the room the sick man summoned me with his eyes. I went up to him and bent over him.

"Do you want anything?" I asked.

He made a sign of No, and with a great effort raised his hand outside the bed and reached it toward me, murmuring: "Thanks."

I understood. It was his good-bye. He thought that he should perhaps not be there in the morning when I came back.

OUR ORDERLIES

THE corps of orderlies is not always sympathetic. I must say, however, that in the room where I am employed, each one does his duty, thanks, no doubt, to the active supervision of the Sister, thanks also perhaps to three singularly moving personalities among the orderlies themselves.

To begin with, there is Nicolas Indjematoured, twenty-two, a Greek, and a subject of the Ottoman empire. He held a highly

lucrative position, of which he was very proud, in a bank at Constantinople, but when the war broke out, he could not bear the thought of being drawn into service with the Germans against France, and did not hesitate to give up his job. He would not even see his old mother again, but made a will providing for her with all his small store of property, and sailed away as a stowaway on a steamer which landed him at Marseilles. He enlisted as a volunteer in the Legion and was ordered here, where, however, soon after his arrival, he received a serious finger wound, and was sent to St. Dominic to be cured. He explained his state of mind to me with simplicity and emotion:

"You can understand, madame, how ashamed I am, among all these brave men, not to have done anything yet for France. Luckily I can help Sister in serving them. It's a great honour for me."

In the hospital room they all call him "the little Greek." Night and day he holds

himself in readiness to do things for the invalids, whom he treats with touching consideration, refusing doggedly to accept the least remuneration from the management.

Boisset, a stubby little orderly of some sixty years, is an old employee of the hospital. An ex-pastry cook with no family, he was operated on and cared for at the hospital ten years ago. His case is one of those mysterious stories of conversion that work themselves out in secret near this cross-shaped chapel, with its four great doors wide open on the wards of suffering.

Boisset, once cured, begged permission not to leave the hospital, "hoping," as he said, "to consecrate my life to God in the service of the poor wounded."

Do not his words recall those of the brothers of St. Francis? Like them, Boisset has summed up his whole life in these two words: simplicity and heroism. He is at others' service night and day, just as he desired to be. The Sister calls him "her right arm,"

something at which he only half shows his pride. He is the one that's called upon, with never any fear of putting him out, if there's anything to be done in the way of lifting some fellow on whom a specially delicate operation has been performed, or doing some other difficult bit of duty. "Boisset, Boisset!" You get accustomed to hearing his name called out each moment. And Boisset, untiring, runs from one bed to the other, with his mincing, weary step, incessantly. In his moments of leisure he harks back to his old trade, begging from the kitchen some left-over bits of milk and whites of eggs, with which he cooks up some sweet dishes for his beloved patients, by whom they are much appreciated. What strikes me especially in Boisset is his *joyful spirit.* This man, who deliberately leads the hardest kind of life, has a smile always on his lips, and cheerfulness always in his heart. In the little recess where he does the patients' dishes you can hear him humming the canticles, es-

pecially the magnificat, of which he is very fond, as he confided to me, because it's the song of joy. When I find myself with Boisset I always want to talk to him about "Dame Poverty" and "Charity, her handmaiden."

Our third orderly, the Marquess of X, belongs to one of the greatest Italian families. His mother was a French woman, and from the very beginning of hostilities, "he felt," as he put it, "the French blood boiling in his veins."

He found a simple and admirable way of doing something for his mother's country accordingly, by coming and putting himself at the services of the wounded. He wanted "to perform the humblest duties," he particularly specified. He did each day, from morning till night, very humble and sometimes repulsive duties, without apparently recoiling from them. He is but one in the nameless crowd of orderlies, yet the patients very easily distinguish him from the others,

and the consolation and care that he gives them are specially sweet to them, because it includes the admiration of a noble soul and of a whole race for the French soldier.

The day he arrived, the Marquess of X, after making a tour of the wounded, came up to me with tears in his eyes.

"What extraordinary reserves of energy and heroism the French still have," he remarked to me, much moved. "To hear these young fellows tell of the dangers they've gone through, talking about sufferings, not only without complaining of them, but laughing about them, is '*the finest part of it all.*'"

WHEN THEY TALK

Sister Gabrielle accosted me this morning with a luminous smile:

"We shall certainly save Number 32's leg. The work of disinfection is finished. The flesh begins to form again over the wound."

She is radiant. Such are her joys, the only ones she asks of life. Nothing else exists, or ever will exist for her, and yet her face is still young. Let us incline our heads before such lives as hers! In a flash I understand whence comes the deep-seated affinity of soul that rules between Sister Gabrielle and our soldiers; she has given as they have given, everything, even themselves. Only in her case, it is for always and under all circumstances. I ask her what she thinks of Number 3, who seems to me to be picking up a bit. She shakes her head sadly.

"His parents are full of illusions about him, but we can only prolong things for him, with all our care."

Sad, oh, how sad! A little later Mother Mèchin comes and talks to me in a low voice about her son.

"Such a good boy, madame! He never gave us one hour of trouble. He fought so well, they say, and at home he was as gentle as a girl. And he didn't drink or waste his

money. Just imagine, he has saved up a thousand francs, in little pieces, since he was a child. We didn't want him to cut into this money to go to the wars. We preferred to go without things ourselves to fit him out, and let him keep his little savings. He will be very glad of it when he gets married." Married! Alas, poor boy! A terrible spouse is waiting for him, one who will not give him up. But already he has marched before her with as much courage as now perhaps he guesses at her coming near. He is very feeble, but he makes a sign that he would like to speak to me. I bend over his bed, and he whispers in my ear:

"I took communion this morning: I am very glad."

I had just brought him a medal of the Holy Virgin. He smiled with pleasure, and I am moved to the bottom of my soul, seeing him kiss the medal and then place it on his heart.

All this time we are making the acquaint-

ance of newer patients, as they are always coming into this ward, which is reserved for those that have undergone the most serious operations. "One never has the consolation of seeing them completely cured," Sister Gabrielle warned me with a sigh. I stop a moment before a little Turco, who took part in the battle of the Aisne. Both his legs are broken. His face stiffens with pain, and now and then a groan escapes him, though it is at once suppressed. He scolds himself about it, and warns himself, or calls me to witness, I am not sure which, when I hear him murmuring:

"Just look! When you think of the ones who stayed down there, ought you ever to groan? We are happier here. It isn't right."

Those who stayed down there! The imagination recoils before the picture evoked by those simple words; those who stay behind down there in the cold and the night, under constant menace by the barbarian

enemy, who stay to suffer agonies alone, to die; to see their blood, without the help even of a single bandage, flow from their broken flesh and fall to the last drop upon the soil of France. I remember the words of another wounded soldier:

"After the battle, that day, you couldn't hear yourselves talk any more in the trenches for the cries of the wounded. It was like one great uninterrupted wail. You could make out appeals, prayers, calls for help, women's names. Then, little by little, silence came again, as a good many of them died. What we heard sound longest on the battlefield, from one end to the other, was the word 'Mother!' It is always those who are dying who call like that; we know that well now."

Alas! What do we not know now of the many-sided anguish and horror of death! We must certainly begin, like the little Turco, to qualify as lucky the fellows whom destiny delivers up to the hospital. And yet

how they suffer, even these. To physical torture is added too often the worst tortures of the spirit.

"In the two months I've been away, not one bit of news of my family has reached me," a soldier told me, "except a despatch announcing my father's death."

Another had lost a fifteen-year-old son, whom he adored, two hours before his departure.

"His body was still warm: my wife was as if mad with sorrow."

They tell you these things without complaint. France called them: it was quite natural to answer her, to go to her out of the midst of the greatest sorrows, the deepest affections, the keenest happiness; sometimes, like that young engineer there of twenty, married eleven months ago to a girl of eighteen, to tear yourself away from a whole romance! He had been rejected for defective vision, but, and his wife agreed, he decided this did not matter any more, now that

mobilisation was under way, and that he must go. Two days after the birth of a fine boy—a future soldier, the mother said—he left his life of ease and tenderness and reported at the barracks as a simple soldier; and he had been encouraged to do so by that little Parisienne whom we should have thought absorbed in nothing but society and dress.

HOW THEY LOVE IN WAR TIME

You curse this frightful war with all the instincts of your humanity, and yet, ten times a day, nay, twenty, you cannot help admiring the marvellous moral effects it produces.

"War is the scourge of God," the Scripture tells us. Indeed the scourge must come even from God, its sufferings raise men's souls to such heights, souls that otherwise would have vegetated always in the mediocrity of their personal interests and

narrow points of view or vulgar passions. It is the moral level of the whole nation which rises, and has risen steadily, for three months.

This morning I heard a soldier of twenty-five, both his arms broken, ask an orderly to whom he might dictate some letters.

"To the lady who comes each evening and makes the rounds for the letter writers. My poor old fellow, you'll have to send yours that way, too."

"Very good, what difference does that make to me?"

"Well, well," says the orderly with a sly look, "that depends on whom you're writing to."

The other shrugged his shoulders with a movement of supreme disdain:

"Any other time I wouldn't say anything, but at present, you see, it's different. In times of war, one thinks of one's mother, and that's all."

Oh, dolorous but holy times of war, which

purify our youth, which summon up again all our effective faculties, passing them through a new crucible, from which they come out purified and nobly set! Each one of us, it seems to me, could enumerate a certain number of acts and preoccupations in his secret life that "don't exist any more in times of war," if only, at the very least, because they were tinctured with futility or unconscious egotism.

THEIR PRIDE

One doesn't enough realise how little our soldiers ask for, and what pride they have. I have learned it through my own experience. At my first appearance some of them gave me little commissions to do for them. "Would you bring me a package of tobacco, a tablet of chocolate?" Quickly they searched for their purses under their pillows; but I naturally refused to take the money —refused also to let them pay me back.

When this way of doing things became known in the room the remedy was very simple. They didn't ask me any more for things. In vain I offered my services. I succeeded only in getting refusals.

"Thank you very much, madame," they would say; "we don't need anything." And I used to see them, when they thought I wasn't looking, giving their orders to those male nurses who were the least under suspicion of generosity. I had to mend my ways and promise to let myself be reimbursed henceforth, even though I made a few little presents on my own account.

The wounded who had been stripped by the Prussians on the battlefield and had nothing left—nothing, not even a handkerchief, not even two sous to buy a cigar with—went without everything, stoically, rather than express the least desire. They know perfectly well that their requests would be attended to in a hurry, but they know, too, that people's needs are immense, and they

think of others: always this school of war! I saw one of them once who started to get up and then sat there for hours without budging, his feet kept stubbornly under the bed. I learned finally from his neighbour that he would willingly have walked off, but that he hadn't any slippers, and didn't want to go about in his bare feet, because people would have given him a pair at once.

"Well, why didn't you say so?" I asked him, as I brought him some slippers.

"Oh, well, madame, we know there are so many other comrades who need them, too."

They want to have things given to all or none. We have only to obey them and work, work for France.

THE DEATH OF A SOLDIER

THE little soldier Mèchin had a serious hemorrhage in the night; he was in the operating room when I arrived at the hospital

this morning. The Sister had sent his parents to pray in the chapel, they explained to me. The work of attending to the sick went on as usual; nothing must be allowed to stop the movement of the wheels. Toward ten o'clock I saw the litter coming back, borne slowly and with infinite precautions. Sister Gabrielle walked quite near it, and never stopped repeating: "Gently, more gently still."

The little soldier's face was as pale as a corpse; his eyes, which seemed to have sunk back in their orbits, were closed. When he was lifted up to put him on the bed, the shock, light as it was, brought on the supreme crisis. His breath, slow and scarcely perceptible, quickened strangely. His candid blue eyes opened, dilated, immense, as if looking for some one.

"He wants his parents," the Sister said to me in a low voice. "Go and find them quickly. It's the end."

In the quiet chapel that opened from the

big wards, the poor Mèchins wept and prayed. I called them. The mother clasped her hands together, turning to me:

"The operation was successful, wasn't it, madame?"

Alas! I don't know, I fear not; but they must come quickly. Their tears blind them; she can't see her steps; she stumbles, and I have to give her my arm for support.

The moment she approaches her son she recognises the shadow of death on his dear face, and would have given a cry of sorrow, but that Sister Gabrielle stops her, putting a finger on her lips. Soldiers who die must be surrounded by so great a peace.

"Here is your mother, here quite near to you," says the calm voice of the Sister in the ear of the dying man. "She embraces you. Your father is here, too. And here is the crucified One, Our Lord, here on your lips."

The little soldier kisses the cross and smiles at his mother; then his eyes, wide

open, and as if drawn by some invincible attraction, turn and fix themselves on the open window opposite the bed, through which can be seen the infinite depths of the sky. Nothing again, till his last breath was drawn, could make his gaze turn elsewhere. Where have I already beheld a scene like this? I remember—it was in Greece, at Athens, last year. In the room of the tombs, a simple and admirable funeral monument represents death. A fine young man of twenty is standing ready to depart. His parents, their faces torn with sorrow, stretch out their arms to him, calling him, but he, so calm in the purity of the white marble, his eyes as if fascinated, looks fixedly, with all his thought, into the distance, one knows not where. As we passed this masterpiece, the young Greek who was with me whispered to me:

"Look at that boy there. He sees *something else.*"

Our little soldier, too, seemed to see some-

thing else. The chaplain gave him the last blessings. The mysterious shore drew nearer moment by moment. A deep silence, solemnly calm and very moving, fell suddenly on the great room into which the terrible visitor was so soon to penetrate; truly he must die well, surrounded thus by his comrades, upheld until the end by a Sister of Charity. The wings of her white cornette tremble above the young face in its last agony. The Sister's voice, already a supernatural one, is the last of this world's voices that Private Mèchin is to hear. She says, and he repeats slowly, the supreme invocation: "O God, receive me into Thy Paradise. Jesus, have mercy on me. Holy Mother of God, pray for us in the hour of our death."

It is over . . . the last breath exhales gently. The young soldier's gaze is fixed forever on the great light of God. Sister Gabrielle gently closes his eyelids and places the crucifix on the boy's heart. All is so

calm, so evangelical, that the parents themselves dare not weep. Ah, how truly he spoke, the chaplain who wrote from the front: "The soldiers of France die without pain, like angels."

When the parents were led away for a while Sister Gabrielle piously replaced the sheet on the dead face, and said to me:

"This is the time for the patients' dinners. If you will, we'll go and serve them, and then we'll come back and lay out the body of this poor lad here."

I look at her wonderingly; she is very pale, and her eyes are full of unshed tears. She busies herself with the necessities of them all, with her usual clear-headedness. Have they already broken with everything of earth, these Sisters, lifted themselves for good above the most pardonable frailty?

THE FUNERAL

This morning the burial of Private Mèchin took place. The modest procession assembled in the temporary burial court, a solitary enclosure planted with solemn pines, not lacking in poetry in spite of its tragic name. The body lay in the white chapel quite hidden beneath the trees. At the moment of raising the coffin, the command, "Present arms!" sounded outside. The remains passed through the midst of comrades, their guns in their arms, who saluted before escorting them as far as the cemetery, the muzzles lowered in sign of mourning. The words, "Heroism" and "Our Country" showed in white letters on the black pall, whereon our three colours had been thrown.

"It's a soldier! It's a soldier!"

The further the procession passed the greater grew the crowd of strangers, who fol-

lowed weeping. A soldier! That touched every one. Everybody asked himself, "Where is my own now?" For our army, that serene and magnificent army, is built chiefly on the wreck of the most intimate happinesses, the profoundest feelings of tenderness in those that are left behind. And yet to-day this reaction upon oneself, contrary to the usual course of things, only begets a more vivid compassion toward these poor parents. They have taken each other's arms, according to their native habit. The mother has covered her white headdress with crepe. The crowd keeps at a respectful distance from them, and they show out in full view, bent by age and sorrow, lamentable, leaning on each other, as they follow the body of their child, so young a body to go to its last resting place, surrounded by the military and blooming with flags. On Father Mèchin's account they have called out the veterans of '70, and the oldest of them pronounced a simple and earnest discourse

over the lad's grave, "which his comrades shall avenge," he says. A tri-coloured ribbon is tied to the wooden cross that marks the new grave; other ribbons like it are attached to the other crosses roundabout.

When they leave the cemetery the parents are led away by people they don't even know, who want to save them from the dreariness of an inn at such a time.

"Let us do it for you. Do!" they say; "our boys, too, are down there; we can guess what it must mean to you."

Father Mèchin's sorrow is momentarily alleviated by so much honour and sympathy. He weeps, but also he goes over his old campaign with these new friends, while the mother follows mechanically, seeing and understanding nothing. Her head is bent, and she can talk only of her son, in a kind of dolorous soliloquy. I hear her murmur:

"My dear little well-beloved son. I shan't leave you so far away from us.

When the war is over I'll come back and find you again; I'll keep your money and have a pretty little monument made for you, and when I have time I'll come and find you. I shall always be with you, always. . . . "

She disappears, and I think of so many other mothers in the cities and villages of France suffering this same martyrdom each day. But our young soldiers' graves are sepulchres that teem with life: France will come forth from them, stronger and greater, fecundated by so much blood and tears.

A JUST REFLECTION

When the work in the room by any chance leaves a few moments' leisure, we naturally chat a little with the soldiers. M. de Man found comfort in their talks that he could not find anywhere else, he wrote. What a school, indeed! Their simple recitals, quite impregnated with heroism and

sorrow, follow one another from bed to bed with an admirable monotony, in the tenor of which France may well glory.

One of our young wounded talked to me about the bearing of the Germans under fire:

"They stand up well under the grape-shot," explained this veteran of twenty, who had sacrificed an arm for France. "They know besides that if they fall back they will be shot, even more surely than if they go forward. But in separate engagements, in hand-to-hand fighting, or when they are taken by surprise and have no officers over them, they surrender immediately."

And with a perfectly incommunicable tone of disdain, he concluded:

"You see, it's not the way it is with us; they're fellows who don't know how to get killed for nothing."

A SIMPLE STORY

I SET down here, just as I heard it, without running the risk of spoiling it by personal reflections, the admirable story of the little Turco with the broken legs, whom I questioned about his adventures.

"In war one naturally mustn't expect to get too much to eat; but I'm certain we've had our full share of suffering on that score. The worst time was in the Argonne once. For three days and a half we hadn't touched a thing: you really began to feel yourself disappear. My lieutenant, whom we liked, a fellow who knew how to march, I can tell you, got us together and asked:

" 'Who has any rations in reserve?'

"No one answered, because to tell the truth, if we had any, it was a temptation to save it for yourself. Finally I made up my mind. I said, 'I've a can of "monkey-meat," lieutenant. Here it is.'

"Three others, too, after me, gave up their tins.

" 'I've got one, too,' said the lieutenant. 'I'll give it to you, as well as this bread that I've saved. There are twenty of you: you will divide each tin in four parts and eat it, with a little piece of bread for each. It isn't much, but it will sustain you a while longer.'

"While the men were doing as he said and making the division, the lieutenant went off a little way and sat down by himself. He even put his head in his hands, and I realised that it was so he shouldn't see us eat. He was pale as pale; I went and stood before him and presented arms.

" 'Well, what more do you want?' he asked impatiently.

" 'Excuse me, lieutenant, but you counted up all wrong; we're not twenty.'

" 'How do you mean—not twenty?'

" 'No, lieutenant, we're twenty-one, and I'll not touch this portion unless you'll take half.'

"The officers have lots of feeling sometimes; it's extraordinary. I saw large tears on my lieutenant's face, yet he wouldn't accept it from me. That was a little too much for me, I can tell you. But when he saw that he was making me furious, and that in truth, as I had told him (for I am pig-headed) I would not eat anything, he changed his mind abruptly, and said to me:

" 'Sit down there. Thanks. We'll eat together.'

"Imagine if I was not proud to sit there at mess with my lieutenant!"

COMRADES

I STOP before Number 67, a vigorous colonial, who took part in an heroic charge. He received four balls in the legs and was left on the battlefield, when two Prussians came and robbed him, saying cynically: "We won't kill you if you'll let us take everything and not cry out."

Your money or your life—"highway robbers"—one title more to give those who already are called assassins of priests and women and children, burners of churches. After these cowardly thieves had gone, the French soldier worked himself by his elbows as far as a rather isolated cabin, where he found five other comrades still more gravely wounded than himself. They lived there four days, weak from loss of blood, trembling with fever. Each evening, under cover of the darkness, the colonial left the house, crawling. He used to go and shake the apple trees in the garden and bring back to his comrades any apples that he had succeeded in shaking down. They had only rain water to drink. Finally, when two of the wounded seemed like to die, the soldier I speak of took upon himself the task of going out in search of help.

"I said to the others," he told me, " 'If no one comes, my friends, you'll know that I've got my reckoning.' Then I slipped out

in the wood. I met two Prussian sentinels, and I stayed two hours stock still, waiting until they should be asleep or go away a little distance; then I went on again. I must have made six kilometres before I found a French soldier again, and how many times I felt as if I could not go another inch! My arms stuck in the mud, or caught themselves in the brambles. I'd hardly strength left to work them free. Oh, it's not so easy to manage without legs! And then I must say really, for four days, I'd had nothing but green apples and water in my stomach. But at last they succeeded in saving my comrades; that was the main thing."

He laughed several times quite carelessly in telling me this tragic story; but his face was serious and moved when he mentioned "the comrades." One cannot help seeing how much this word means to them.

"I must say that we were happy everywhere with the comrades," concluded Number 10 in finishing the story of priva-

tions and hardship that he had endured.

Another time I was passing some fruit to one of them, who reached out to take it eagerly—for they were not spoiled in the matter of desserts—then stopped himself suddenly: "It would be better if you passed it round first among the comrades, madame," he said. "There might be some of them sicker than I am. I'll take some if there's any left."

A young soldier told me the story of the retreat, alas, from D——: "We had to run steadily for four days and five nights, never stopping more than five minutes at a time. The Germans were so near us that we could not hear our commands for the whistling of their bullets, and our officers had to give their orders by motions. I was as well off as any one could be, for I can run fast. All of a sudden the man next me got wounded in the foot, and fell, crying out 'Help!' Of course I couldn't leave him there to be taken by the Boches. Two of us grabbed him

by the shoulders and dragged him along with us. But from that moment it was much more difficult for us to get ahead. To tell the truth, some spirit must have been watching over us, or we never should have gotten out at all."

Some spirit watching over them! Does not the victorious, invisible shadow of the warrior saint escort our armies? "Sword in hand, eyes alight, France in their hearts" —always as it used to be.

One needs no excuse to congratulate our soldiers on their devotion to their "chums." It's quite natural that they should help each other, isn't it—under the fire of the Germans, as much as in their villages—more, much more than in the villages;—for under the fire of the Germans, the egotism of every day, the absorbing preoccupations and self-interests of daily life, disappear, and nothing is left to them but the noblest traits of the French character. That character is capable of running the supremest risks for the sake

of comradeship that may have seemed a little vulgar before, but which is now saintly and heroic.

Perhaps the most elevated phase of this character, and at the same time the most profoundly human one, shows in this other story by the same soldier:

"One day the Boches were in flight," he said. "We were pursuing them with the bayonet in some woods. I had my eyes on one of them particularly. He was fat and heavy and was getting tangled up all the time, while as for me, I jumped easily over obstacles. (Do you see this image of the two races?) I caught him up at last, and with one lunge buried my bayonet in his back. It pierced him clear through. Oh, I felt badly: it was the first—the first man ever, I hope you believe me, that I had killed with my own hand. I was looking round for a second when I heard something stirring in a thicket. I threw myself at it, my bayonet fixed; but a dying, wailing voice cried at

me: 'Comrade! Comrade of France!' Now this is a word, as we know perfectly well, that is often used as a trick; but what can you do? When they call you comrade like that, it's impossible, you can't make up your mind to kill them. This time I did right. It was really a dying man, dying in agony even, I'm quite sure. He held out his hands to me and they were already cold. I shook them and called him too, 'Comrade.' Then I yelled to a quarter-master sergeant to give him a drink. Myself I preferred to go on and not wait. France comes first—doesn't it?"

What moves you most when you hear such stories, what forces the tears into your eyes, is the touching lack of self-consciousness in these lads. They were so far from thoughts of war three months ago, yet now to-day they speak quite naturally the language of epic poetry. France is forever the land of miracles. . . .

ENGAGED

I KNOW now whence comes that expression of secret joy, that reflection of inner light that glows on the face of Number 17, even when his suffering is the most cruel. I ought not perhaps to say it, for it's a sweet secret that has been confided to me, but Number 17's engaged. Oh, how this Marie of his, this rustic inhabitant of our mountains, is beloved! I think few women can ever have received letters more touching, or more filled with deep and delicate tenderness than hers. These letters indeed are Pierre's main occupation now. He takes advantage of his postal frank and writes two of them each day. He really has to make up for lost time, hasn't he? The soldiers knew how to deny themselves the thoughts—such tender thoughts —of their Maries during their hard campaigning, and this fiancé, too, though his heart was full of love, became in duty bound

a terrible warrior, a dealer of death. But, at present, on his hospital bed, where there is nothing to do but suffer, let the dear thought of her, full as it is of sweetness and promise, come back to him. Let it come back! Every thought is for her, and he indeed is veritably hers. For him Marie's shadow is always there; she is part of the least scene, the greyest hours of this hospital life. He declared to me—in a low voice, as always when he speaks of her—that he never gets tired of her. "Even when I don't write to her I think of her." For he can't be distracted from her a single minute; in one way or another he must occupy himself with the thought of her always. Truly a rare sentiment blossoms in this honest and simple heart that has given itself so profoundly. Many fine ladies perhaps might envy Marie, and Marie, later, if she can understand, will thank the terrible war that has made her cry so hard. She will not marry a simple peasant now, but a hero, one

of those, to be sure, who were "French by first choice," to use the fine expression of Mr. Barrès. Despite the obscure way of life to which this young man will go back, it will always be true that his actions, at a given moment, might have inspired Virgil or Homer. In all ranks of society the sad betrothed women of to-day will be very proud on the day the soldiers shall come home. I know some of them already who, though living yet in this uncertain, menacing hour of peril, bring a valiant coquetry into play. It's very touching to see the youth of France, at an age when happiness is their right, rise so easily to such heights of sacrifice. But patience! They will be paid back too in happiness. The day of home-coming will strike deep into their inmost hearts. Separated by death's danger, their beings will stir anew for one another with never-to-be-forgotten sentiments. Their affections, steeped in this fortifying bath of heroism and renunciation, will

spring up again enriched with devotion and deeper tenderness. Number 17 feels this, when he writes to his dear Marie: "You see, Marie, I loved you a great deal; but I think that I should not have known, except for the war, how to love you the way I do now." There is never a questionable expression or gross allusion in these soldier's letters written by a farmer's son. Each one repeats the same rather naïve expressions of tenderness. He puts them in every time without ever varying them. It is true in this way monotony becomes a quality. You feel the extreme pleasure that Pierre undergoes in writing his sweetheart's name as often as possible: "My dear love, I received your letter yesterday with such great pleasure. I believed you had forgotten me. And then I said to myself, Or she is sick, or she has had too much to do for the wounded. Dear Marie, you tell me you'd like to be near me so as to take care of me. Oh, how glad I should be if you could come;

if I could see you there near my bed, like the Sister. And we'd talk of the old times." (He is twenty-three and she twenty-one: it's true they've been engaged five years.) "Thank you for the photograph; your sister is carrying out her promise very well. You'd think it was one of the pictures you see in the illustrated magazines. You must excuse me, please, if my letters are badly written—in bed, you know, it isn't so easy to write. You, oh, indeed, you write very well! It's a pleasure to read your letters. Follow your own ideas about the muffler; what you like will always please me. Marie, I long to hear more news still from you. It seems to me I can read your next letter already. Make it a very long one, so I have to take two hours to read it. And that piece of a rose from your house that you sent me! Marie!

"My dear beloved one, I should like to write you long, interesting letters, the way

you write me, but I see nothing here in bed. My foot continues to enjoy good health, better and better all the time. You think I suffered, but that's nothing, as long as I can walk, and haven't got to tell you, 'Marie, I'm infirm; I can't support a wife; we can't think of getting married any more.' Oh, if I'd had to talk to you like that—think a bit, Marie! I can assure you that I never cried down there, but that I've cried more than once in my bed thinking of that. However, I'd have said it to you just the same, for I should not have wanted you to live in poverty on my account.

"When I received your letter yesterday at four o'clock, Sister Gabrielle was near my bed, and so I showed it to her, and she said to me, 'You must be very happy; she's written you a long one.' I answered her: 'She always writes me like that!' She told me to send you her kind regards, and to say that you are very good. You write me that you

are well again; I hope it's really true. Take care now. It's very cold. Above all things, you mustn't be sick.

"You ask me how many there are in my room? Sixty-five and the oldest of them is twenty-nine. Don't distress yourself. I'll get well, and in a little while we shall be together again. What a happy day that will be for us, Marie! I can't believe it. At night, when I can't sleep, I say to myself quite low:

" 'I shall see her soon, I shall see her soon!' And sometimes I am sorry to see the daylight come, because then it isn't so quiet, and I am less at peace to think of you. When we two are alone I'll tell you what I suffered, and you'll tell me it's impossible. Nevertheless it's true; but it isn't worth while talking about it yet. You ask if I had forgotten you; you know well I hadn't, only duty must be done. Even if I wanted to forget you, Marie, my heart couldn't do it, because I love you.

"You tell me it gives you pleasure to write me long letters, to keep me happy; and I, oh, I'm so happy when I read them. I see you always have things to tell me. That shows me that *you think with me*, and I can say, too, that I always think with you. You tell me that you dreamed about me. I, —well, five nights ago I dreamed about you, and I didn't dare write you about it. I see that you tell me and so I'll tell you, too. Marie, you know what dreams mean? Do you want me to tell you? Each day I read your letters two and three times; that way I know them almost by heart, for the night, when there isn't enough light to read by. Soon there will come the happiness of seeing each other again, dear well-beloved. Still another time, I love you, Marie."

SEEN AT THE RAILWAY STATION

DURING the mobilisation the railway station at X—— was the scene of many laud-

able and quite special instances of devotion. People sat up there day and night to wait for the trains of soldiers and revictual them. Orders came in every minute, by telephone, by telegraph, brief orders such as these: "Coffee for five hundred soldiers in two hours; sixty dinners for this evening; new dressings for a sanitary train," etc., etc. A society woman, serving as improvised cook and hospital nurse, executed most of these curt and various directions, and never even thought of being tired. Her devoted spirit found a way to cope with all the miscellaneous tasks that the exigencies of the station gave rise to. Like a true general of France, she cleverly made the most of the zeal with which those about her stood ready to see her orders carried out. What curious things passed on all around her! What interesting personages filed through the little room—infirmary and kitchen in one—which was now her realm! They presented to me there one day, a good-looking young dragoon

who was on his way back to the front for the third time. Each time he came back he took every precaution, before he was fairly cured even, to see that he should be sent out again. His seventeenth scar was just healing. When he gave out this figure some one cried: "But he's not a man; he's a skimmer." He joined in the other's amusement with his clear French laugh, but said:

"Just the same, how would you like to get seventeen holes shot in you like this and then be treated like a skimmer?"

One of the most interesting moments at the station was that in which the following episode took place. A sanitary train filled with wounded arrived unexpectedly. They were severe cases all, two hundred of them unable to sit up. They needed revictualing, but at the preceding station only bread and cheese had been given them—an extraordinary diet for people with fever, on the point of undergoing operations! But there was nothing else to give and they had accepted it,

in the best spirit. Diplomacy had to be used indeed to get these dangerous provisions away from them. They all protested—which was natural, for they had had nothing for many hours. They asked for milk and it was promised to them—most imprudently. The station master, who was undergoing days of real distress, had, as a matter of fact, only one jug of milk. One jug for five hundred invalids, and the train stopping for only half an hour! It was actually a physical impossibility to go to town and back in the half hour's time. What was to be done? People got together. People discussed the situation. Now it happened that opposite the convoy of wounded, a cattle train was stationed, due to start in a moment in the opposite direction. There was one car full of cows, their good old heads looking so peaceful in these warlike times as they kept clumsily trying to thrust themselves through the openings, but never quite succeeded in doing so. The good herdsman, a native of our mountain heights,

blue-bloused, a big stick in his hand, came up and bowed awkwardly.

"They're French, you know," he said, pointing to his beasts, "and they'll gladly give up their milk for the wounded soldiers."

His suggestion was received with acclamation. Everybody began to milk, and the spectacle of these improvised milkmen and milkmaids made our dear wounded men laugh. Well, it was not without its picturesqueness, after all. More than fifty jugs of milk were distributed in this way. It was really what one might call a providential revictualling.

A FIRST COMMUNION

In Sister Gabrielle's room one of the patients was a kind of Apache, forty years old, a fighter with a most suspicious past, suffering from a horrible wound in the right arm. After the severe operation that he had had

to submit to, we all saw him awaken out of a veritable crisis of madness, due to a state of habitual alcoholism. He was apparently bent on strangling the unfortunate interne who attended him, who would hardly have gotten safely out of it all without a bad wound, if the Sister had not thrown herself between them just in time. I must confess that the spectacle of this half-naked man, his body tattooed all over with women's pictures, drivelling, yelling and threateningly waving his bloodstained arms, was most impressive and repugnant.

"You, Sister, I don't wish you any harm," he howled in his revolutionary way; "you are a benefactress of humanity; but not to be able to strangle this man, here, I who have stabbed people in all the cross-roads of Paris, who have killed policemen with my hands," etc., etc. And the Sister answered with her unvarying sweetness, "Your arm is very bad, my boy. You must lie down and keep quiet. I'm going to give you a drink,

and I shall stay now near by you. Come, now, be good."

The Apache, who was so called even by the comrades, remained for a time a truly terrible patient. He never thanked anyone for the care that was taken of him, and never omitted to sneer at prayers. He called us sometimes to his bedside from the most pressing business, solely to say to us:

"You know I don't believe in your good God." Orders were given by Sister Gabrielle never to make any answer to him, and to be just as scrupulously attentive to him as to the other wounded.

Well, after a while our Apache, becoming little by little quieter and more polite, asked one day, in tears, if they wouldn't be so kind as to give him a catechism and some instruction in religion, that Catholic religion, that he had always attacked without any understanding of it. Last Sunday he made his first communion with touching fervour. So much for religious ceremonies in wartime.

CONVERSATION AS IT IS TO-DAY

THERE'S no useless visiting, no wasted time now in France. When one steals an hour from work to go and see one's friends it's only to find that glory has just touched them in some way—joy or sorrow. Women struck down by the most cruel grief—wives whose homes and hearts are broken forever; mothers who have felt their own blood flow away in the veins of their sons, and some part of their own lives extinguished in the last breath of these so dear lives—even such as these don't recognise the right to remain long idle. They hide their tears beneath their crepe and busy themselves doing things for the comrades of those who will never come back again. The thought of the war follows them in all these glorious tasks. Everything centres in "the front" henceforth: sadness, happiness, hope, courage; and all of our tenderness and compassion, all

our labours, go back there too. Our souls yearn toward those moving frontiers, those frontiers that are no longer composed of material French earth only, but of living Frenchmen, pressing forward, all the time. One doesn't talk any longer except of these big things. Last week at a big military clinic I went to see a young officer who had come back from the front for the second time, afflicted with a new wound, as he called it, and even with an old one yet, in spite of which he was insisting on going back too soon. There was quite a reunion there, and quite a good deal of talk and chat. At another time my arrival would have disconcerted them, but now their conversation was far removed from smoking room talk and dubious subjects. Young men and old, women and children, we could plainly read the thought of France in one another's eyes. Ah, beloved land, fated forever to unprecedented adventures in the realm of morals as in that of glory, miraculous France of 1914,

who smilingly, despite the blood and tears, hears but a single rhythm beating in the reunited hearts of all her children! At certain moments one feels such a glow of happiness at having her for one's native land that one simply must speak out about it. French, French—one is no longer surfeited with this word nowadays. That is certainly the view of the young officers, with their silent enthusiasm. They were talking of "Her" steadily, when I came in. One of them was reading, from his war diary, a very interesting account of the battle of the Marne, of which I heard the following passage:

"When General M—— took command of his troops he could see at once that their morale had suffered severely in the successive movements of retreat. The day when he ordered the offensive, that had now to be maintained at any price, the soldiers, down in their trenches, without absolutely refusing to obey him, couldn't make up their minds to budge, but lay there murmuring sullenly:

'They whistle so, General, the bullets whistle so.' With that General M—— began to cast about him for some means, not to terrify them in the German manner, but to awaken the old careless French bravado in their better selves. This was what he did: he climbed up alone on the edge of the trenches in the bottom of which the soldiers lay. He stood there upright for ten minutes. He was literally enveloped in a hurricane of bullets and shrapnel, but God willed that he should step down again safe and sound. As he did so he remarked simply: 'They whistle, boys, but, as you see, they don't hurt you: they're harmless.' Since then orders have been issued to our officers not to expose themselves needlessly: their lives are too precious to us. But this act of sublime French folly so electrified the men of this regiment that it made them invincible."

The other day, in an admirably French drawing-room, some one who knew this hero himself, recalled a will written in one line

and found by an unhappy father, Monsieur I——, on his son's body: "If we are victorious, I beg my parents not to put on mourning for me." To what heights of forgetfulness of everything that is not "Hers" can they not climb! Verily, verily, they love her as one can only love at twenty years—with no reserves—with all their youth.

A SOLDIER'S COMPLIMENT AND SONG

I FOUND myself once in a convalescent home at the hour when the Prefect had come to visit the wounded. After the customary distribution of cigarettes, one soldier, with his arm in a sling, rose, and amidst general emotion delivered the following complimentary speech:

"Madame, in the name of my comrades, will you permit me to thank you for your amiable visit, and the presents that you spoil us with so? We are surrounded here with

such devoted care that our wounds heal as if by magic. Will you kindly express to the Prefect our patriotic sentiments, and tell him how proud we are to have had the honour of shedding our blood for France? Tell him of our ardent desire to return soon and take our places in the battle front among our comrades; to chase these cursed, sanguinary, devastating Teutons away forever from our country's soil."

That's what our soldiers are. The moment they find themselves in the presence of some one who stands a little for the authority of France, they feel the need of putting into words their eager desire for victory at all costs, as if they talked to France herself, and renewed to her the offer of their lives in sacrifice. You ought really to see the expression of their faces, the tears of energy and resolution that burn in their eyes, while the most lettered of the band speaks up for them. A moment later, as I looked at the good stove which warmed the room, and

round which they spent the pleasant hours of their well-earned convalescence, some one remarked dreamily:

"You don't think of the trenches any more here, do you?"

An indignant protest rose on all sides: "Don't think any more about the trenches? Why, that's as much as to say that's all you do think of! How could you forget the comrades, with their feet freezing down there, while we warm ourselves here?"

The ward nurse told us there was a little infantryman among the wounded here who had a very pretty voice and knew a lot of songs. Immediately he was asked to give us one. The request made him very unhappy: he was not afraid to sing at the front before the Boches, but here really he did not dare. One entreaty made to him gave good reasons for our persistence. "Oh, please sing, we beg you to sing. They'll always sound so fine now—soldiers' songs." He sang, and his

young male voice made our hearts quiver with an emotion that no great artist could ever have given us with a song profane. For to him his song was a sacred thing. Just imagine the scene for yourself. We are in the year 1914, and he is a French soldier. From outside gay trumpet calls come in, those same calls perhaps that in certain places at the front summon men forth to die. Imagine that there is an audience of women, all whose tender thoughts go down there, and thirty wounded comrades who are getting ready like him to return to the firing line. Imagine this, and then think how his voice must stir them with his soldier's song:

Soldiers brave, companions hardy,
Lo, the glorious day is here.
Hark ye now the clarion calling,
Presaging your victory near.
Fly, intrepid soldiers all!
France is up, and watching there.
When the sounds of combat call,
In the vanguard do and dare.

REFRAIN

Forward, forward, brave battalions,
Jealous of our freedom be.
If the enemy comes near us,
Forward, forward and advance:
Death to the enemies of France.

When your rapid foot and true,
Skims the soil and scales the height,
One would think across the blue
Eagles from the peaks took flight.
In the vortex black you fly;
Sometimes, unseen hounds of war,
In the plough-share's path you lie,
Rising fiercer than before.

Heroes valiant and inspired,
All the world our fathers won;
And this world regenerate,
Fecund is with every son.
Noble grandsires, rest in peace;
Sleep within each august grave,
France can count upon us now,
Sons shall worthy prove and brave.

Caught and stricken to the heart,
Mortal wounds, O France, you feel.
On your bruisèd, blood-stained breast,
Stamps the conqueror's brutal heel.

France, O France, lift up your head,
From your face wash off the stain,
Soon the dead our tread shall waken,
Of Alsace and of Lorraine.

ALWAYS SUFFERING

ALWAYS and incessantly one returns to the subject of their sufferings. What an accumulation of sorrows, tragically varied, weighs down our unfortunate land! Into Sister Gabrielle's room to-day there came with radiant faces, a father and mother who had journeyed from the depths of the Corrèze—more than four hundred kilometres—in the sure belief that they should find with us their only son, from whom they had had no news for almost three months. By a cruel chance his exact name and regiment were those of another soldier, who was indeed here, and figured in the lists published by St. Dominic's Hospital. The unhappy parents, arriving full of joy, were confronted with a stranger's face. The group around his bed was heart-

rending. The young soldier who was the involuntary cause of this unutterable deception wept with the father and mother.

YOUNG RECRUITS AND TERRITORIALS

At the beginning of the war one saw going out as our defenders, and coming back wounded, only the "little young ones" among our soldiers. Oh, these little young, how sympathetic and winning they were, with their irresistible gaiety in the face of everything, their bravado, their fine carelessness of life. By their side now a graver sacrifice is being made, one that is sadder and more conscious of itself, namely, that of the men no longer young, who have had to leave a wife and children, a home of which they were the support. Such as these lived tranquilly, far from the movement of troops; less than any one did they dream of war; and in truth one must needs admire them the more

for rising to such heights of sacrifice. In several places at the front people said their service had insured success. At the hospital I saw them suffer, die, alas, as veritable heroes of France, and I lost that slight tendency to irony with which one too readily looked upon them at their setting out. These men fulfilled their hard duties in the most unselfish and humble conditions possible: in one day their whole existence was upheaved, their laboriously acquired small property renounced, all their customary ways broken with; and at a certain age this perhaps represents the most painful phase of duty. They marched to death, in a word, who had had time to grow fixed in life. They had spread out the roots of their lives, and now they found themselves dependent on younger men, under the sway of younger men's careless enthusiasm and quite fresh physical forces, thanks to this new experience of war by which the younger are put first. But, for the rest, everything arranges itself quite mar-

vellously, and nothing is more touching than the social comradeship that was established forthwith between grey moustache and beardless chin. The young soldiers treat their elders fraternally in a way, but always with a shade of respect, too. Tact is a French quality, and the younger men know quite well the meaning of such words as husband and father of a family; know how significant they are of responsibilities and pain and care, of tears shed on their departure. The brave territorials, on the other hand, look admiringly on the feats of their young brothers in arms. The other day a group of grizzled soldiers was going through its manœuvres with great application under the direction of a little twenty-year-old corporal, who had a chubby face like a pink-and-white baby, adorned, however, by some glorious scars. An old campaigner, passing by, called out: "Well, well! Look at the company baby they sent down there to learn things so he could teach the territorials."

UNDER MARTIAL LAW

DECLARATIONS of war sometimes have unexpected consequences. A poor woman, very unhappy at home, was crying yesterday, and kept repeating: "If only soldiers were the police. Oh, if soldiers were the police!" When she was asked the meaning of this exclamation she replied: "Well, you see, during the mobilisation, one evening my husband was beating me in the street, as he often does, and a patrol of Turcos passed that way.

" 'What are you doing there?' they asked my husband.

"He answered them: 'Leave me alone. She's my wife. It's nothing to you.'

" 'Indeed it is something to us. When soldiers are police, people don't beat their wives any more, and to prove it you're going to come along with us to the station.'

"And as they were leading him away, they said to me:

" 'That never happens where we come from.' "

The Turcos make some rather hardy statements. But in the presence of the enemy they have shown so well their ability to defend our rights that we mustn't question too curiously whether they apply them strictly in their own homes.

OUR PRIESTS

THEY are everywhere, but at the front especially, and the most diverse opinions are reconciled on the subject of what soldiers our country has in them! A higher will victoriously pursued its ends in bringing together again, in the closest and most unexpected brotherhood, across what a chaos of tragic developments, the Catholic priest and the French soul.

"I will punish thee because thou hast forgotten my name," said the Lord in other times, in vengeance against his chosen people. Alas, dear France, wast thou not the

eldest of his daughters, and hadst thou not forgotten and denied his name, that terrible, protecting name which comes back so naturally to thy lips to-day? Not on the battlefield do we women see our priests in their activities, but at the hospital, at the bedside of those who suffer and die for France, everywhere, every day. The ones who have not gone to the front devote all their time, wholly and unreservedly, to the soldiers, especially to the wounded soldiers. The personal measures to which the administration is not equal, overwhelmed as it is by its duties, have been taken upon themselves by the priests; if there are letters to write, sad news to be related, confidences to be received, encouragement to be given, everything you can think of—all are laid upon the priests.

The importance of their role touches the very mysteries of the soul; no one has the right to measure it. But who knows what our priests will not do to maintain this fire of self-sacrifice and enthusiasm in the

soldier's heart, this fire which must go on burning to the end in France, in the least ambulance, and for which those who work and worry, far back from the common field of danger, far from the captains and the shouts of conflict, are more tried than by the rude life of camps. The soldier divines unerringly that with the priests succor of a human kind and at the same time a superior power are given him; and also he loves him and wants him and *relies on him for everything.* Recently I noticed a new orderly at the hospital, and observed that he was particularly kind and thoughtful with the patients. A soldier saw that I was gazing at this man, with a bit of astonishment, and said to me, motioning toward him: "But, madame, it's a priest!" His accent was untranslatable. Verily no terrestrial power could ever rob them of this mysterious influence, this "heavenly fire" that comes to them from God himself. From their chief down to the most humble among them, they are

indeed the successors of those to whom "all power" was given, "in heaven as well as on the earth."

THE LITTLE FRENCHMEN

One fighter who had "come back from down there" told me it often happened, when families moved away from the unhappy, devastated regions, that boys from twelve to fifteen refused to follow their parents in their flight, thinking themselves big enough to get a place among the soldiers. The troops give a good welcome to these young Frenchmen. They present them to their captain, and, their identity once established, the boys have the right to be named as of the regiment, and share its destinies. They eat at the soldiers' mess, and are not held to account for anything, free to do as their fancy wills. But this fancy never varies, they say; in the wreckage of the battlefields they speedily pick up arms for themselves, and shoot them

incessantly, with an incredible boldness that promptly wins the enthusiastic affection of their elders. Oh, these little Frenchmen of 1914! There will be powder mixed with blood in their veins. What generations they are preparing for the future!

WHAT WE RECEIVE FROM THE FRONT

COMPLAINTS about the bad weather, the cold, the rations? Not a bit of it! You don't know the souls of our militants if you suppose that. What we receive from the front is either heroic stories, or programmes of fêtes, such as this:

CONCERT GIVEN NOVEMBER 22, 1914

BEHIND THE TRENCHES DURING OUR REGIMENT'S THREE DAYS' REST

With the assistance of the soldiers whose names follow: Tharaud of the Opéra-Comique; Kanony, Nimes Theatre; Dupin, Municipal Theatre, Nancy; Trantoul, Grand Theatre, Lyons; Barthe,

Brest Theatre; Escudié, Crystal Palace, Marseilles; Josthan of the Kursaal, Reims; Gubrét, prize man of the Paris Conservatory; Sizes, professor of the violoncello, Limoges; Sergeant Dumail, character singer (amateur); Sergeant Moucdoués, Lafayette Theatre.

Programme

1. What the Stones Say (Joubert). 2. The Dream Passes (Krier). 3. Carmen, Air de la Fleur (Bizet); The Masked Ball (Verdi), etc., etc.

And so on for twelve numbers, ending up with the soldiers' chorus from Faust.

CORRESPONDENCE IN WAR TIME

THE subjects people write of, like the things they talk about, have undergone a transformation to-day. No, indeed, one doesn't write banal letters any more, that tell you nothing at all. The very existence of the nation, the dearest lives, the secret heroism of which they have been capable, revealed magnificently in the face of death—such are the subjects on which one exchanges

one's hopes, one's feverish anxieties, one's felicitations to-day. Energy, patience, daily sacrifices, supreme resignation to our country's cause, such are the sentiments one cherishes, on which one seeks to keep up courage. Marvellous letters of war time! One can cite from them anywhere; they will all give the same sound. The country has only one soul now.

There was a young widow, Mme. de V——, whose husband, an officer of great valour, promoted with the most flattering distinction, had expired in the hospital at Epinal some hours before his wife's arrival. "In these hours of distress, my thoughts go often toward you," she wrote to a friend. "What shall I say to you? I am proud, with a sorrowful pride, but crushed amid the ruins of my happiness that was only yesterday so complete. There are moments when I cannot believe the terrible thing that has made me suffer so is true. It is indeed true, nevertheless. God has caught me back, after let-

ting me enjoy for five years that rich intelligence, that fine spirit from which I was so proud to take my lessons. I find myself alone again, facing emptiness. Pray that I may have the strength to go on with the task we two began, of bringing up, as his father would have done, this son whom I should like so much to be a soldier."

There was a little infantryman from Africa, a volunteer, who wrote to his brothers under arms: "You are fighting, you are giving your blood, and I, here I am, doing exercises, with nothing to be afraid of. Oh, what jealousy I feel! Happily they are putting our instruction through very rapidly. I have hopes that we shall leave soon, because they're already choosing those of us that are to serve as scouts. If only I can be chosen! I put my name down at once."

There were so many then, though one did not know it, so many of the youth of France, who dreamed of giving their lives for their

country. In many other letters still I find the proofs. Mlle. de F——, true Frenchwoman of the French, told me thus of her brother's death:

"Thank you for your compassionate pages; it is a sweet comfort, in our great woe, to find it so unanimously shared by all France, where everyone may be prepared, alas, for the same supreme sorrow. Our Robert that we loved so well had the *glorious death of which he had always dreamed.* He was leading his brave infantrymen for the third time that day in a heroic bayonet charge, in a forest in the Vosges, when he fell, struck by two bullets full in front. His men saw him stretched on the moss beneath a great pine tree. They would have gone to fetch his body, but a furious charge of the enemy obliged them to retire. Seven officers, intimate friends of Robert, fell that day, with the battalion chief. What will the barbarians do with his dear remains? Shall we never find his grave again? Our eyes at

least follow him in the skies, where his soul, that was so ardent in its heroism, no doubt has taken a place among the martyrs. My poor friend, you divine how much we suffer, and yet, we are happy and proud to have given him to France. He made a victorious campaign at the outset; we had enthusiastic letters. Afterwards they had to fall back and back, and he came to die near his dear garrison at St. Die, in the forest of Rambervilles, without having seen success. On August twenty-fifth, the eve of his death, he wrote us a letter full of courage, even of absolute faith in victory. Our dragoon took part in the grand battle of the Marne. Now he is fighting in the Aisne night and day. He has had two horses shot under him. May God keep him for us! Hearty and tender greetings to you, and confidence in victory so dearly won."

Victory—they think of that always and before everything. "I hope," a mother in mourning had the courage to write, "I hope

our dearly loved son, who has so often dreamed of dying for France, with God's will may win the final triumph, and help protect those who struggle still. I read in the paper the names of your five sons, all wounded, and yet going back to the firing line. You ought to be proud, and I share your glory and anguish. May God spare you the grief I suffer, and save your brave sons for you, who will be so happy to bring back their laurels to you."

When one begins to talk about the mothers, the documents pile up—intimate documents, damp with tears, that pay for glory without hunting for it. Thus Captain de S—— wrote to one who had very specially and silently filled this heroic rôle of mother:

"No monuments, you see, are built to mothers' woes;
And if one tried, as by all rights one should,
To mark by bronze or marble what they suffer,
The passers-by could not endure to see their tears."

Again this is what Mme. de C—— wrote from a corner of France that was rich in heroes:

"My grief is unutterable. My beloved son was my pride, the greatest source of happiness to me in this world. God has taken him from me in the full bloom of his youthful career and soldierly zeal, and the sacrifice is so much beyond my mother's strength that I can bear it only at the foot of the cross, trying to imitate his courage. He was made captain on the battlefield for deeds done under arms and a mission valiantly carried out, though he enjoyed his reward for it only a little while; but what glory consoles a mother in the loss of such a son? He fell near Nancy and I was able to recover his body, but while I was away my youngest son, Louis, eighteen years old, who was enrolled at the beginning of the war, was called out too. I did not see him again on my return, and already he is fighting. Our hearts, dear friend, are being put to the tor-

ture. We must pray that our sufferings may purchase victory."

To acquire this so much desired victory few women would have given ten fighters, like Mme. de L——.

"My J—— has just fallen for his country," she wrote last month. "I offer up my great grief and all my tears to God and France. You knew my son; you know what I have lost. The only thought that can lighten this terrible blow is the knowledge that my boy had realised his dearest dream: he had always yearned ardently for this heroic death. He wrote to me the day of the mobilisation: 'If it were not for the memory of your face, this would be the happiest day of my life.' I was told that he said to one of his comrades, half an hour before he was struck full in the breast by a bursting shell: 'I have just made my act of contrition, my preparation for death, as I do each day. Out here you must always remember that the next moment may be your

last.' He was the first of my ten sons to fall. How many more will France ask of me? I gave them to her with all my heart when they went off, but my soul is torn."

A LITTLE REFUGEE

As I was going one day to visit one of our patients who had had to be moved into the contagious ward, I was rather surprised to perceive in the middle of the long range of white beds a little childish face that contrasted strangely with the military visages all about it. It was that of a delicious child of seven years, with big eyes full of intelligence and candour. He himself gave me his name and qualifications—not without a shade of disdain of me as a provincial.

"I am a refugee from Paris, madame; and who are you?"

I introduced myself in turn, and we chatted together. My little interlocutor soon gave me his confidence. He told me, smil-

ing, as if he were telling the happiest of stories, a childish, lamentable history of neglect and abandonment.

"I was almost always alone at Paris," he told me; "mamma worked out somewhere. As for me, I was the cook; I polished the furniture; indeed, I did as well as I could, for I was beaten when it wasn't done right."

"And how did you happen to go away alone?"

"Oh, well, a woman who lived near us came back from the station, and was telling about a train of emigrants that was going off that evening. Then mamma said: 'All right, here's a good way to send the boy on a journey that may be a long one.'

"It made her laugh, but I cried and wept. I wanted to stay in Paris; I was so happy thinking the Prussians were coming there, and that I could fight them. I've got a gun, you know, and I've been at the garrison and seen the soldiers exercising. For a month I did it on the pavement by our house when-

ever I had a spare moment. Fortunately the neighbour woman promised me that the Boches would come as far as this; but you don't see them often."

"And didn't your mamma go away with you?"

"No, indeed she didn't. She had her eating good and sure in Paris; so she stayed there. You can't blame her."

All this he said in his little clear voice, his eyes looking straight at me full of innocence.

"And you are happy here?"

"Oh, very happy, very. I had grand luck to catch diphtheria and come here. I don't really like to ask the Sister to find me a picture-book, she's so busy, I can see that quite well; but we talk about the war all the time with the comrades. They are very nice. They give me some of the chocolate they have, and play with me. When I can get up perhaps they'll let me drill."

This last word was uttered with quite a

thrill in his voice: it meant his greatest wish and hope.

How relative a thing is happiness! This poor child, sick in a hospital, a waif among a lot of soldiers, deserted even by his mother, only a tragic problem for his future, counts himself one of the happy ones of this earth, and from now on belongs to them. For an instant I remained mute, heart-broken by this tale of unutterable misery told in this cheerful voice, while the small boy's eyes, ever restless, roamed furtively round the great room. Suddenly, pointing with his finger at the crucifix hanging on the wall, he asked me: "Who is that there?" Poor little Frenchman of Catholic France! Could he have been led hither to St. Dominic's in the tragic whirlpool of events only to find himself opposite this cross, and ask that question? Man proposes: God disposes. One might say in these days, the world proposes. —I talk to my little refugee of his Father in Heaven and of Him who on earth loved

to surround Himself with children pure in heart. He literally drank in my words. One is very seldom listened to like this in ordinary catechism lessons. Truly, one would say that a mysterious and puissant hand works in these days of travail on the newest hearts, hearts that might otherwise have escaped the clutch of circumstance.

"Now, just think," concluded this child, with his amazingly mannish airs, "they've never talked to me about these things you've just told me. And yet I'm seven years old, and since I was two—anyway—I've understood things very well. When I was seven years—two years—at five they could have explained everything to me. It's all the same. I might never have known! You'll come back, won't you, madame?"

Yes, surely, I will come back. Others, too, will look out for him, and soon I hope this little refugee, brought thus to us by the designs of Providence, will have just reason to call himself a happy child.

A MODEST LITTLE SOLDIER

HERE is the letter of a father to his son, a silent, modest little soldier in one of our temporary hospitals, whose name his comrades read with surprise in the papers as mentioned in the order of the day of our army. Then only was he willing to tell his story, the heroic story of a soldier of France and one that we can never forget.

Livrot was ordered to deliver an important order and, although he was severely wounded while on the way, he did not feel that he had the right to go to the rear. He disregarded a terrible wound which needed immediate care and faced death which he felt close and threatening.

"I went on just the same," he said simply and shyly at this point in the story, "but when at last I reached my Captain, I was all in; I fainted at his feet."

He apologised for this unexpected weak-

ness and was half ashamed of his own courage, but at my request he was quite willing to show me—with permission to use as I chose—a letter from his father of which one of the other men had told me.

This letter is so full of sober courage, so sincere and vibrant with the noblest affection that can exist between father and son, that I should lessen its beauty if I did not transcribe it exactly, just as it was written by that fine and simple soul.

Montargis, Nov. 11, 1914.

DEAR SON:

We were not at all surprised to see your name in the Gatinais paper, which said that Livrot was mentioned in the order of the day. We felt great joy. It is an honour. We thank you and we hope that your wound will heal as rapidly as possible. If you have the happiness to recover, we will go together and balance our account with the Boches. That is what I would like to do. In spite of what you have said, am I not right? Those who are fighting suffer—I agree so far—but those who are not fighting also suffer in knowing all that is being done in Germany to conquer us. You know me; together we could strike a good blow. They

talk much about you in Montargis. We are proud of it. Many of your comrades come to see us and congratulate you, they even say that you have not had all the reward that you deserve. We thank you for your sense of your duty. Our health is good and I hope yours is the same. Your mother and your father and many of the neighbours send you good wishes and honour you for your courage.

LIVROT,
Highway Inspector.

This is what the Head Surgeon of the military hospital wrote to this father when he read his letter:

DEAR SIR:

We are proud and happy to have among our wounded a soldier who is so courageous and at the same time so modest. This morning, on learning that your son was mentioned for his gallant conduct in the order of the day of our army, I allowed myself to replace you and embraced him warmly. As soon as his health is re-established I intend to present him to his comrades and, in spite of his modesty, commend his devotion to duty and his brave heart. You may be proud of your son, my dear sir, for you have given him the best of yourself and of the noble thoughts which I feel

are in you. Your son showed me your letter, which moved me deeply. If you are proud of having such a son, we also are proud of having fathers capable of such sentiments. Our young patient's wound is doing as well as possible. . . .

OFFICERS AND MEN

I TOLD you a few days ago with what enthusiasm a certain infantryman spoke of his young officer, M. X——, who was promoted to captain only eleven months ago, and who is to-day, because of his courage and military ability, Major and Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Here are the words in which Major X—— himself sends back from the front his thanks for all the well-earned congratulations on his honours:

"You may truly say that I owe everything to the heroism of my men; the splendid and disinterested courage of these men who work modestly at gigantic tasks, in the accomplishment of which we, the officers, are no more than spectators. It is they that you

reward through us, and to them that your congratulations should go."

France knows well what heroic makers of victory she possesses in these officers who so modestly declare themselves the spectators of their men, and one of the things which stirs us most is the mutual admiration of the soldier for the officer and of the officer for his men. It is a feeling which will bear fruit, a promise of success for France, and it must increase in both that capacity for endurance and that devotion to duty that this strange and terrible struggle demands. It must relieve also that anguish of soul which comes to men far from home, by making a veritable family out of a regiment. And where in family life could one find greater devotion than that of the Captain of the General Staff who, without a thought of his shoulder straps, picked up on the battlefield one of his men who was badly hurt and carried him two miles on his back to the hospital. It was one of Sister Gabrielle's pa-

tients who was saved in this way and he said as he told his story:

"A thing like that will never happen to a Boche."

A few months ago it was rare and unusual for a man to owe his life to another. Now it is part of our everyday life. I knew of two brothers who fought side by side, and when one of them, who had risked his life to save one of our 75's, fell badly wounded, the other threw himself out of the trench—without even thinking, as he said afterwards, of the terrible danger which threatened him on every side—gathered up his brother under a hail of bullets, making himself a target for the German fire, and carried him to a stretcher. He was wounded in the eye by a bit of shell and covered with blood, but still he slipped off his overcoat in the rain of a Northern night to cover the shivering body of his younger brother. Such are the families of to-day. No more selfishness, even for the preservation of one's own

life; all affection growing closer and finer. Never perhaps in France have people loved each other as they do in 1914, because never have they sacrificed so much to duty. Who wrote the verse:

"There is no great love, except in the shadow of a great dream."

SISTER GABRIELLE'S OFFICE

In the middle of the ward, behind the long row of cots on the right, a low door opens into the Sister's office. This office is a sort of hall, long and narrow with no window but a skylight, looking out only on heaven like Sister Gabrielle's own life. On a wooden table the big registry book lies open with lists of all the wounded received and discharged. A crucifix hangs on the white wall, and a shelf with a few books carefully re-covered with black cloth. The clothes hanger shows the only thought of herself which has place in Sister Gabrielle's

mind, a spotless white blouse which she slips hastily over her blue Sister of Charity uniform for the operating room. Far at the end of the room stands a chest with drawers marked—"supply of chocolate biscuits for the sick," "stockings and underclothes to give out"—and on the floor, almost everywhere, cavalry pouches, red trousers, tunics to be mended, and men's heavy shoes smelling strongly of leather. In the midst of all these things Sister Gabrielle's young face—between the wings of her white headdress—is like an angelic vision, ready to return again to heaven. It is in this room that she stops to take breath, at the foot of her crucifix, when the days are too hard, and there I found her weeping after the death of her brother. But from this room she goes back to her sick more serene than ever, and more tenderly maternal.

THE COMPANY OF THE AUDACIOUS

I HAVE just seen again at St. Dominic the little soldier who told me such touching stories about his "comrades." He begged for permission to return to the front—"as soon as possible"—and he is now back from that second and terrible journey with a new wound. He is very gay and full of spirit—delighted with the hospital, the nurses, the wounded, and everything else. I have a fancy, however, that this particular little infantryman has never lacked spoiling and petting at home. To the circle that gathers around his bed he protests eagerly and with justice against the shade of contempt with which people speak of his corps, the Fifteenth. Certain mistakes in the beginning, promptly and cruelly expiated, have been a hundred times atoned for. The Fifteenth corps now inspires the most chivalrous devo-

tion. I know one young officer, twice wounded, who, because of his knowledge of English, was offered a place on the staff of General Castelnau. He refused it, saying that he was not willing, during hostilities, to exchange his post as lieutenant in active service in a corps slightly in disrepute, for a position of less danger and apparently of more honour. To-day my little infantryman, in a voice quivering with emotion, was telling what he had seen, and I stopped to listen to one of his stories as I passed.

At the front, down there, he had made friends with a recruit sixteen years old whose father had been killed at the beginning of the war, and who had enlisted, as he said, simply "because I know how hard it is to lose one's father, and I want to serve in the place of some father of a family."

He seems to have been a curious little soldier; always with a great pipe in the corner of his mouth and always on the lookout for anything that touched his protégés, the fa-

thers of families. He watched over them and in every possible way guarded them from danger. Every time that one of them was told off for perilous service, the little orphan, who could not bear to see them die, would offer or even force himself in to go in their place. But—as he knew the regiment well—if a young man was called on he never stirred but muttered between his teeth: "I value my skin as much as you do yours," and kept on peacefully smoking his pipe. He was a child who had risen to this power of absolute self-sacrifice because he had been able to feel truly and profoundly one great grief.

"In our regiment in the Fifteenth corps," said the young infantryman, "a company has been formed called 'the Company of the Audacious.' It is commanded by a gallant captain and made up of volunteers who agree to undertake the most dangerous tasks. One night the company was given orders to cut the wires which formed the outer barrier

of a German trench. One by one they crawled through the grass and bushes to the terrible neighbourhood in which they had to work. Suddenly a quantity of bombs thrown by the enemy, revealed as clearly as if by daylight the company at their adventurous work, and well-aimed bullets rained on them from all sides. The Captain, lying on the ground among his men, said to them:

" 'My children, they have our range; whether we go back or forward, death is certain. It will be better to stay and finish our work and die as brave men, and as we cannot hide any longer, if you want to, we will sing the "Marseillaise." '

"Immediately the national hymn rose around him mingled with the groans of the dying. The regiment behind heard the song, and the sound of the fusillade, and understood. The splendid contagion of that rapture—that enthusiasm for death—seized them; that thing which 'the greatest of

philosophers will never be able to explain or understand.' Nothing could hold the men, and for an hour the whole regiment was part of the Company of the Audacious.

"The next day the official notice contained this line:

" 'At X—— we took a German trench.' "

MEMORIES

I HAVE just heard some very touching stories from one of the many French women who were able in a day to reach a height of devotion and courage attainable by them only because beneath their everyday life of women of the world, they have always kept the same high standard of duty. This one of whom I speak, who had been a frequent visitor to our hospitals, was sent at the time of mobilisation with several others to open a hospital in S——, a city now occupied by the enemy. I asked her what she remembered of that long and ter-

rible struggle and will try to repeat her story.

"To my great regret," she said, "I had to let the other nurses go on two days ahead, and I shall never forget the journey that I took to reach S—— in the midst of the effervescence of the mobilisation. The only woman travelling, I felt that I, myself, was also a soldier going to his post, a feeling which was both exciting and steadying. In passing through Rheims I saw a regiment of Alsatians packed in cattle cars. The men who composed it had come by many routes and through many dangers to fight with their French brothers. Most of them did not even know the beloved language of their fathers. A French officer gave them orders in German. They had already cheered their colours and the harsh accents of the enemy's tongue around our flag expressed so well the double tragedy of Alsace, that of forty-four years ago, and that of to-day, which will be a glorious contrast. In the corridor of my

carriage some anti-militarists were talking openly of their opinions, and with fine inconsistency declaring themselves quite ready to risk their lives in this 'necessary and salutary war.' All along the route that wonderful spirit which was to save the country was all about me, calm yet thrilling with a glowing life that one felt was inextinguishable.

"At the end of the journey I heard for the first time the rumbling of cannon, and it was to the accompaniment of that sound which continued without a pause that we worked to transform into a hospital the large girls' school which had been turned over to us. My companions had already done wonders, but what a mass of detail had still to be thought of in the midst of such consuming anxiety. In a few days our preparations were complete and we waited, idle, for the wounded to come. It was peculiarly trying to have nothing to do and time to think of what those words mean, to

wait for the wounded. To wait until those scenes of carnage for which the declaration of war is the terrible signal should happen close to us; to wait for the pitiful human wrecks escaped from death to come back to us from those fields of suffering.

"Our thoughts were racked by the horrible realities that we could not see and yet knew to be so near. Inaction depressed and unnerved us and yet how gladly would we have put off forever the moment when our help would be needed. Alas, that moment was not long in coming. On August 14th the wounded began to arrive, and I realised how splendidly equal to their task my helpers were. Several of them had already seen active service in Morocco, Greece or Bulgaria and their morale was even more valuable than their talents and training.

"The atmosphere of S—— was electrified. We felt the line of fire and iron close around us. We were told that one hundred German cannon balls had fortunately only

killed four and wounded twelve people. For the first time enormous aeroplanes flew over the city. They seemed heavier than our own and were painted a darker colour. A few bombs were dropped. Each day we saw great numbers of autobuses loaded with provisions for the army rush past at full speed, going we knew not where. The mystery that enveloped us was most oppressive. An Inspector coming to see us, stumbled without knowing it into the middle of the General Staff. He saw fifty or sixty officers and was told that he was between six army corps. Before letting him go they required his word of honour not to tell where this happened.

"August 15th.—Mass in the open air. The deep voice of the cannon sounds nearer. Every one sang in chorus the creed and the canticle, 'Have pity, O God,' and many officers and soldiers received the communion. What one feels at such a time lies in the depth of the heart and cannot be expressed. The badly wounded have begun to arrive

and in one day our hospital is almost full.

"August 20th.—General X, commanding an army corps, and his staff visited us as they passed through. The general was cheerful and spoke to the men in a comforting, fatherly way. He told them not to worry. 'Whatever happens we will end by shaking hands with our Russian allies in Berlin.' One of his officers took particular interest in the hospital and when he was brought back to us three days later on a stretcher, I was surprised to hear this patient whom I thought a stranger, saying: 'I did not expect, Madame, the pleasure of seeing you again so soon.'

"The 23rd of August was the day after a great battle—that in the wood of St. H——, and the wounded were brought in in quantities. About noon came a general whom we placed as best we could in a little room. He did not want us to give him any special care, though he was suffering terribly, and was anxious only about two of his officers.

By a curious chance a soldier of his division was brought in a few moments later, and the general was eager to learn from him what had happened to some of his 'children.' He insisted upon seeing the soldier at once.

"'The Major?' he asked.

"'Dead, sir.'

"'The Captain?'

"'Dead, sir.'

"Four times the question was repeated with the same sad answer. The general bowed his head and asked no more, but we saw the tears on his strong face and stole out of the little room in silence, as if we were afraid of waking from their glorious sleep the men whose names had just been called.

"A Lieutenant de V——, who came to us with a flesh wound on his head, a ball had glanced from his skull, told us that his regiment had gone out with one thousand two hundred and sixty men and only sixty-seven were left. He refused to stay out of danger, to go back to the depot of his corps, or even

to report his wound, but only asked us to dress his head, and started out the next morning alone to try to find his regiment. Nothing could persuade him to give up the dangerous plan, and heaven knows what became of him.

"August 24th.—It was evident that the situation in S—— was becoming more and more serious, and my responsibilities weighed heavily on my shoulders. That afternoon I heard that the military hospital was being emptied. Should we do the same, or should we stay? I felt deeply that the lives of those around me depended upon this decision. I asked advice of the Dean of S——, who had seen 1870, and he was quite decided. 'Empty your hospital; go yourself as soon as possible; do you want your wounded bombarded or massacred? Do you want to be forced with your nurses into the hospital service of the enemy for the rest of the war?'

"That decided me. Nurse Prussians, un-

der orders, like a German woman? Never! I went to the station and they promised me after some difficulty just space enough on the last train that evening. The railroad officials reserved a car for our personal use. Then I went back to the hospital and told the others of my decision. They begged me to change and some of them asked to stay, or if the hospital was closed, to be sent to the front. I told them that places were reserved for them in the train with the wounded, but they all refused to go, and my responsibilities were made heavier by their courage.

"We began to dress our poor wounded for their journey, taking them from the rest that they had bought so dearly. To avoid exciting them we told them that they were being moved to make room for some more severely wounded, so it was 'all right,' and there was not a complaint about the change which cost them such torture. While we were hurrying to prepare them, more wounded arrived,

and then still more. They had to be packed wherever we could put them in the hall and theatre of the school. One poor little second lieutenant, very badly hurt, asked if he might not stay; he was hardly twenty, with the face of a boy, and he accepted my decision with the obedience of a child. I felt myself in his mother's place, and thought of her when I advised him to go. He had lost all his uniform and we wrapped him up in an old brown overcoat which had been given to the hospital, under which he quite disappeared. We put an old hat on his head and I wrote 'officer' on a label, which I sewed on his chest, in spite of much protestation, for he wanted no privileges.

"Once ready, he seemed so weak and exhausted that I provided him with two injections of camphorated oil for the journey. He could give them to himself or get help from a comrade if he was too faint. At nine the carriages came, and the painful start was accomplished. Was this horrible nightmare a reality? The sound of the departing

wheels struck into our hearts. A moment later as we were taking a little food, a Colonel of the Staff brought us a motor full of wounded. He had found them in the ditches all along the road, and some of them were delirious. He took them straight on to the train, with a permit, for nó one could now drive through the streets, as the bridges were all mined.

"We had now to arrange for the most seriously wounded. The doctors, whose devotion had never for an instant flagged, had refused to let these go and some of them were dying. We could not bear to desert them, and yet from every side I was given the same counsel, 'Go, empty your hospital. Your wounded will be safer in the civil hospital than under the Red Cross.' I called the doctors together again and they promised to give particular care to those whom I was leaving behind. At ten o'clock the curé came to confess them and administer the communion. There were still arrangements

to be made about their admission to the civil hospital, so I wanted to go there. I had the password, but after eleven o'clock it was of no use, as no one was allowed in the streets. With one of the nurses I walked for miles along the Meuse to avoid passing through the city. We heard the explosion of some of the mines which were blowing up the bridges. The good man who went with us had seen his father shot in '70; he himself, a baby, had been tossed about by the Uhlans, and he begged us over and over again not to go.

" 'You would not desert us now; that would mean that the Prussians were coming back. You won't go?'

"At last we reached the hospital and saw that heavenly, peaceful sight in time of war, the white headdress of the Sisters ready to help all who are in trouble. Our wounded would be expected at dawn. As we went back we saw far away in the dark town the red glow of a fire. I heard cries from the

same quarter. The machine guns were in place, ready for the Uhlans. How dreadful it all was!

"We reached home at two o'clock and found the others still stoically on duty. At three o'clock came the sound of carriages in the courtyard and we ourselves helped to load them with our poor wounded. It was the dying that we were sending this time. But we may at least have secured them a peaceful end, sheltered from the terrors of the bombardment and the arrival of Prussian soldiers around their deathbeds and all the horrors that threatened them so near the lines. It was such reasons alone that kept my decision from wavering.

"What anguish we felt! We got into the last wagon to accompany them to the hospital. During our passage through the town, half-dressed people with haggard faces came out of their doors or appeared at the windows along our route. The least noise

made them think the Prussians had come.

"For the last time we went into our hospital, and with aching hearts made once more the round of the great empty rooms. What an amount of wasted effort was represented by those abandoned preparations. We took all the men's arms and military equipment with us and at last got into an ambulance and the porter took us to the station. There we learned that the communications with S—— were broken. There were no more trains—it was the end. They told us that the commanding officer could perhaps requisition an automobile for our use. We went to him, but he was sick and had lost his voice and had nothing to give us but one bicycle. Then we thought of the general who had come to visit us. He had chosen the house of one of the chief supporters of our hospital for his quarters with his staff. We went there, but, alas, there was only emptiness and silence, for the gen-

eral had already betaken himself farther away. At any moment S—— might become a part of the very front of the huge battle.

"We made up our minds to make use of our good horse, 'Tirot,' as long as his strength should last. His driver, however, who was afraid that he would not be able to rejoin his family after the bridges had been blown up, declared that he, himself, was going to leave us for good. One of us, who has the faculty of making quick and happy decisions, took the reins, and was ready to drive our cart through the thousand difficulties of the way. Our destination was uncertain. We would go in the direction of Rheims as long as 'Tirot' was willing to drag us.

"At last we started across this marvellously beautiful country, covered at that moment by a population of strangers, who were the incarnation either of war or fear. We passed through the whole system of defence. The Eleventh corps was there and a

part of the Sixteenth ready for the action which was to take place that very evening. Batteries were hidden behind every hedge. Looking across the fields, we could see rows of men's heads in the trenches. As we went along we distributed to the men the arms and supplies which filled our cart. Some artillerymen asked us for some sacred medals. The road was blocked by the pitiful crowd of fugitives. They drove carts loaded with old men, children, household furniture and the greatest variety of things. In the midst of the unbelievable dust every one travelled along slowly, very slowly, saving their horses, so as to get the longest possible distance out of them. We got down at all the hills in order to rest 'Tirot.' A number of unfortunate people who were on foot without any kind of cart, carried heavy bundles on their backs. I noticed one young woman almost exhausted, who was soon to become a mother. There was a child of about two years old in the wheelbarrow which she was

pushing, and another ran beside her holding to her skirts. She was all alone. Nowhere did we see any men. All these wretched people, torn brutally from the homes which in the absence of their fathers or husbands would have offered protection to their loneliness, were thrown out on the world without any support or any safeguard. What will become of them? The soldiers, themselves, who were marching in the opposite direction on their way to the firing line and who had cares enough of their own, could not see them without being moved. I heard one of them mutter, 'It's hard, all the same.'

"Our poor 'Tirot' was very tired. We fed him a little every now and then along the way, for we did not know what else to do. To rest him some of us travelled for two kilometres in a motor loaded with meat, from which we finally got down saturated with unpleasant smells. We rested in a village and a zealous young doctor brought us a raw leg of mutton as provender for our

journey. We heard that at S—— while we were still busy over our wounded, the first patrol of the Uhlans had entered the town and that eighteen of them had been killed.

"We had to begin our journey again on foot, for the horse could go no farther. From time to time we gave him a little water in a bandage box. A battle was going on, it seems, only twelve kilometres away, and we heard the cannon continuously from that direction.

"We reached the top of a little ridge and sat down at the edge of a field of wheat to catch our breath. At our feet the immense movement of the troops went on vaguely far and near. The regimental wagons and the medical corps passed one after the other. You would have thought that they were huge colonies of human ants hastening towards some mysterious goal. Suddenly three German aeroplanes flew over us, spying out the movements of the armies. Seated on that little hill in our white nurses' uni-

forms, we became at once a very convenient target, so that we were obliged to go on again. It was ten hours since we had left S—— and so far we had only covered twenty-five kilometres.

"We were going through the beautiful woods of Mont Dieu, and there, in striking contrast, the quiet was profound. All the peace of the evening had taken refuge in the forest. The peasants, who were leaving their homes, did not disturb it, but under the dim splendour of the great leafy shadows they marched silently along followed by their long flocks, until they made you think of the old patriarchs in the happy times of universal peace. But these moments of respite were short. As we came out of the woods we met an officer who secured a horse and a bicycle for us and sent ahead word about us to the next station, where three automobiles were very kindly placed at our disposal. In that way we finally reached V——. We had been travelling since dawn and arrived at the

close of the day. It was impossible to find a single free room in any hotel, but fortunately some hospitable people took care of us and, military to the last, found quarters for us with some people of the village. We were looking forward to the prospect of enjoying a little rest there while we waited for orders from Paris, but on the second morning we learned that the town was to be evacuated and that we must leave in a hurry. I asked the authorities for some means of transportation. They sent us an automobile much too small to hold us all. To my great anxiety I had to leave my nurses behind me for a while, but I could come back for them that very evening. My chauffeur understood the value of time in these days of invasion, but he had to moderate his speed in going through the village of Souain, all prepared for defence and destined to become in a few days the scene of that hard struggle, so bloody and so glorious for one of our regiments. Already on that very evening we

ran into chains stretched across the streets, and we were challenged at every street corner. That was our very last sight of what was soon to be the field of battle."

Stories of this kind are like scraps of the gigantic strife which, blown by the battle winds, reach even to those fortunate parts of the country that are sheltered from the horrible devastation and immediate fear. We listen and say nothing. Silence is the fervent homage called forth by the courage and all the inexpressible feelings aroused by such memories.

Little children of 1914, you must listen later on, without saying anything; you must devoutly listen to the "true stories," terrible and glorious, made up of danger, of heroism and of tears, which are being prepared for you in every home in France.

NEWS FROM THE MÈCHINS

It was understood that the Mèchins would write me about their sad voyage home. Poor people, I saw them crowd into the third-class railway carriage where all around them were young soldiers of their son's age who had been wounded, but who had recovered and were going home to their lucky parents. The Mèchins left in sorrow from the same station at which they had arrived two months before with hearts so full of hope. At dusk as they climbed sadly into the great brilliant express train, their son's lonely grave was sinking into darkness under the shadow of the pines. A tri-colour ribbon tied to the cross drooped in the dampness of the November night. But the Mèchins are French peasants in the best sense of the word; possessing beside their deep Christian faith, that peaceful balance of soul and body which is the result of the healthy life in the

fields. They have also the touch of fatalism which teaches them to say in the face of trouble, "Well, since we can do nothing about it—" Above all, they feel a fine and constant sense of responsibility to the earth, and have the habit of putting aside even the greatest sorrows to meet a demand that cannot wait, and which calls them to the work of each season.

All this was in the letter which Père Mèchin wrote to me and in which was enclosed, as a sign of respect, a visiting card carefully printed, "Mèchin, farmer." Fine souls with a proud title. I shall probably never see the Mèchins again, but the letter I shall always keep.

"Madame: I have the honour to tell you that we reached home at six in the evening after a journey of thirty hours. All our children and grandchildren were waiting for the arrival of the diligence. How many tears were shed with ours! It is hard for us to be comforted for the loss of our beloved

child, but we must conquer our grief so that we can do our duty as working people. As I said to my family, it is a duty more than ever, now that the little one has died, to defend the soil that we are cultivating. Poor, dear child, his face is always before our eyes.

"I end, dear lady, in begging you to accept our thanks, and in sending you a warm handclasp of friendship. My wife, my children and my grandchildren join me.

"MÈCHIN, PÈRE.
"Decorated in 1870.

"Please remind Sister Gabrielle of her promise to have a wreath of laurel put on the grave of Private Mèchin. We do not want them to put anything else."

No, truly, nothing else should be put there.

Strew not upon this urn you close
The flower of Aphrodite, the rose.
For love came not his way.

Nor even gently o'er it shower
The immortelle, old age's flower.
He lived but for a day.

But lest men feel that to his shade
All flowers have been denied,
Pluck for him laurel from the woods around,
'Twas for his land he died.[1]

A LAMENT

Sister Gabrielle pointed out to me today one of the wounded who was growing worse. Absorbed by so many operations she could not wait by that bed of pain. I took her place there, and can you imagine the lament full of sadness and tender with an inexpressible tenderness which came from the lips of that young man?

"Poor France, how your children suffer! Poor, poor France."

He was pitying her for the martyrdom which she is suffering through her own flesh

[1] The Phœnician Women, adapted by G. Rivollet. Act IV, Scene I.

and blood. How completely he felt that he was *her son.* And certainly she has never been more gloriously, more cruelly or more tenderly a mother than she is to-day. Her care for her soldier children reaches to the smallest hut of her land. We think of them, we work for them, everywhere, every day uninterruptedly. There is nothing like the pity which they inspire. It touches the very bottom of your heart and makes you suffer not with a sympathetic but with a personal sorrow. It haunts you and follows you everywhere. It is indeed the national soul of France which shudders and weeps in every one of us, which ceaselessly implores relief, at the cost of every sacrifice of her heroic and unhappy children.

SOME LETTERS

HERE are some letters from abroad, which hail France as once more the great nation of the past. Ah! That does indeed do one

good after so often bringing back from abroad the bitter memory of the hardly disguised contempt felt towards us beyond our frontiers. "Our ties with France are coming to mean to us all that is dearest and most sacred," the Marquise X writes from Rome.

And here are letters from our friends, the English, always calm, even in their heroism, and sound in their judgment.

SEPTEMBER 3RD.

Naturally I can not talk to you, my dear madam, of anything but this terrible war. Our people are slow to begin; but you will see that they are equally slow to give up what they take hold of. When "the spirit of battle" has once entered into us we will go on to the very end. It is a splendid sight to see how our men fight, and perhaps our little force—which, besides, will grow larger very soon—will help toward the happy result. On both sides the losses will certainly be terrible, but particularly on the German side. Nevertheless, we must brave everything and prepare ourselves for every sacrifice both of a private and a public kind so that we may escape the Teutonic peril. My daughter is busy in the hospital, but she would prefer to go to France in one of the ships with the troops. It is truly splendid to think that our

two nations, so often enemies in the past, are to-day fighting side by side in this most critical hour of their history. Good-bye, and may we meet again once more in happier days.

NOVEMBER 10TH.

I have been so fearfully busy at the war department that until now I have not been able to find the time to answer your interesting letter. I work for twelve hours every day, including Sundays, and when I do get home all I can do is to go to bed, dead from fatigue. To-day, however, I have come to the seashore for twenty-four hours' rest and that has enabled me to have the pleasure of writing to you. What a time of gloomy anxiety we are going through! I hope that your wounded are getting better and that you have good news from those who are still fighting. In the midst of your own family troubles it should be a cause of great pride and of consolation to you to feel that the whole world has its eyes fixed on your compatriots and that it knows that they are fighting even better, if that is possible, than they ever fought before—with all the old dash which belongs peculiarly to them and which has made them famous in history and also with a new tenacity which I would describe, if you will let me, as rather English. You have in Joffre a great leader. He and our own General French have curious likenesses, moral and even physical, and we like to

point them out. So far as I can judge the Germans are failing completely in their successive plans of going to Paris and to Calais. We can congratulate ourselves mutually on these defeats. The way in which they come back again and again to the attack brings them to certain death, and even if the Allies suffer great losses, the Germans will meet with incalculable and irreparable ones. As to how long the horrible war will last, how can I tell you anything? Nobody can know anything about it. If things go on the way they are going at present, it will die out of itself by the exhaustion of Germany. The result, whether more or less near, will depend a good deal on what is going to be done by the Russians, whose millions of men are just beginning to really move. But you as well as I, we must both "possess our souls in patience" and forbid ourselves to allow our thoughts to dwell unnecessarily on the horror of the slaughter. It is better to save our strength for work.

Here we are waiting for some wounded soldiers and my daughter has a great deal to do in getting the house ready. We shall also have some convalescent officers in need of the open air and those who may have been mentally deranged by their terrible experiences. Once more I beg of you, let us force ourselves to look forward and to think of the better times which are coming.

C. R————.

And here are some letters from our own side, and from what indeed is particularly our own side, those fields of French heroism where, behind a veil of mystery which we must respect, the army that is saving us is manœuvring. This is from one of our best officers, who so writes to his wife that he makes it possible for her to follow, almost day by day, his hard campaign life:

SEPTEMBER 25TH.

I am scribbling this letter to you during the heaviest bombardment that I have suffered so far. The Germans are trying with their shells to drive us from this village which we have held for eight days in spite of all their efforts. Shells of very large calibre rain with a deafening noise on the shattered farms and set on fire the few which are still left standing. At this moment our life is like a penny tossed in the air, and what will happen is so much a matter of chance that no one's heart beats any the faster for it. We have just finished a game of bridge and I can assure you that it was not all this which made us stop it. The men are just going to eat their soup; they are waiting for the end of the tornado to go and retrieve those of their soup kettles that haven't been tipped over. Perhaps this is the forerunner of a German at-

tack. So much the better. An attack—wherever it comes from—would be a change from this exasperating condition of waiting face to face with each other for days, and which can not last. After the Marne, we need another victory to free our Northern frontier. May we soon have it.

SEPTEMBER 29TH.

After some sharp disturbances, it seems to me as if to-night there was going to be a few moments' calm. I'm hurrying to take advantage of it with you. Our position is maintained in the ruined village which we captured by a night attack on the evening of the 13th, lost on the 14th toward noon, recaptured by another night attack on the 15th, and since then have held in spite of an unbelievable bombardment. It is telling you enough to say that we are in a part of the great battle where the struggles of the two sides to gain the ground in front neutralize and counterbalance each other. The Germans do this poor burned and devastated village the honour of treating it like a fort. These deluges of iron and fire fortunately produce more fear than harm, but they are, above all, a severe test of morale. Our regiment is winning a fine reputation for itself in the army for keenness and tenacity, and I understand they are thinking of congratulating it for this officially. Our units, which are now made up almost entirely of reservists, are behaving well. Ah! there is no

longer the fire and youthful dash that our regular companies had at the beginning of the war. The men are slow to manœuvre, they think a little too much about eating and sleeping, but they are determined, tenacious, firm under fire, profoundly anxious to expel the invader, and bearing up well under the prodigious fatigue of our life. We have neither undressed nor taken off our shoes for nearly three weeks, and in the course of that time we spent five or six days in a heavy rain in the woods, crouching in the bottom of chalky trenches, from which we came out in the morning in a condition which you can imagine! There is no question, naturally, of our having our horses, who remain with our orderlies five or six kilometres in the rear. The provisioning on the whole is carried out very well. The wagons come up during the night to within one thousand five hundred to two thousand metres of the line. We send squads back to them and in the morning the companies find that they have almost all they need. Thanks to the smoking ruins, the men can do their cooking without attracting the attention of the lookouts or the aviators of the enemy, but if ever that attention is attracted we get a hail of "plums."

There is nothing to buy in this country, so completely deserted and ravaged. When we dislodge some frightened peasant from the ruins of a cellar we hurry him to the rear. We buy or kill the few rare animals which are still left in the stables in

order to use to the limit what the country still has to give, and at any rate to make it useless to the enemy. Here we only find some starved pigeons for poultry and some frightened cows whose milk we struggle for, and once in a great while a few potatoes and some cauliflower and carrots. They say that the Germans are in serious need of food and that they live only on canned things. They hold on just the same and won't let themselves be pushed out. That will be done nevertheless. The most terrible thing is the prospect of a hard winter's campaign. The few days of rain last week gave us a sharp foretaste of it.

The thought of you never leaves me, any more than the wallet in which I have your photograph and that of the children, and also the prayer to the Virgin "for those who love one another and are separated." But my courage does not desert me either; does it not spring from our love? May God do as he wills with us, but may he always bless us, together or apart.

Neighbourhood of Ypres,
November 8th, 1914.

We have just undergone the most awful day of fighting which we have so far lived through. For five consecutive days and nights my battalion has been on the firing line attacked, attacking, fired at and firing, but unluckily cannonaded above all. The Boches have terrible heavy artillery, and in

addition they are turning against us all their enormous equipment from the siege of Antwerp, and pouring out their ammunition so that we wonder how they are able to feed at such a rate so many fiery mouths. Even at S—— we did not undergo such a deluge of iron nor especially so continuous a stream of it. These four days of fighting have been frightful in every way and they are far from being over; but this morning before daylight we were withdrawn from under fire so that we might be reorganised. Judging by the furious energy which is being put forth on both sides at this moment, it would seem as if this must be their last kick, at which the emperor has come to assist in person. But, no, I do not believe any longer that this is so. The trenches and wire entanglements appear again on both sides. They mean once more that condition of deadlock, front to front. After twenty-four or forty-eight hours of waiting we shall enter this furnace again and the result of the gigantic strife will be reached—God knows when! What will life in the trenches be like with rain and cold? Just think that, during these fearful bombardments, we are kept hours and hours crouching in the trenches, backs against the wall, legs drawn up, heads sunk between our shoulders, like oxen passively waiting for the blow of the hatchet that will finish them—except for the lookouts, who, with their heads above the edge, have the duty of watching the ground in front so as

to be sure that the enemy does not try to advance, and except also when we ourselves receive the order to advance from the trenches in spite of the storm to throw ourselves into an attack. But at that dreadful moment the artillery of the enemy notices what we are doing and redoubles its fierceness in company with the rifles and the machine guns. Oh, those machine guns!

NEAR YPRES,
NOVEMBER 19TH.

I have been fighting continuously since the beginning of the war, but the battle around Ypres during the last two weeks reached the maximum of intensity, conceivable and inconceivable. The efforts on both sides are pushed almost to what is impossible; gigantic, as far as the offensive of the Germans is concerned and no less so in our defensive. From time to time they tried to withdraw us from the first line so as to give us a few hours' respite. But as soon as we arrived in our "relief quarters" they recalled us to the front. That is what happened to me in the evening the day before yesterday at the moment when, with my battalion, I was occupying a farm where I hoped to catch my breath. They recalled me urgently to go into an action where for the sixth time I lost in a few hours half of my command.

"Your battalion," writes the general under whose orders I had been placed in thanking me

this morning, "has shown a devotion above all praise."

That is perhaps just what may happen to me again this evening, now that I am once more back at that same farm to reorganise my command there again. Anyway, on account of the frightful artillery of the Boches, you can not get rest anywhere behind the lines. The "big pots" with their terrible explosives follow you everywhere, showering dismay and conflagration on all the roofs within a radius of ten kilometres. The noise of these is continuous from sunrise to sunset. It is carried to the ultimate limits, the "Colossal" which happily breaks down before our colossal tenacity. "Strange people, those people there," as the song says—emphasising militarism wherever it is brutal and savage, aggravating it by stratagems, by treachery, by unbelievable deceit, while we, with our dark uniforms standing out against all the green backgrounds, express the natural carelessness of a race which is a little too self-confident when it comes to the preparation for possibilities which do not seem to it likely to be realised immediately.

All that is not meant to be bitter, believe me. What will win finally is the combination of heroism and tenacity, and from that point of view we, on the contrary, see only things that are consoling. Frenchmen "tenacious even in inaction," that's what no one would ever have believed. And

yet it is impossible to deny such a quality to men like mine who have just spent six successive days in the trenches without budging from there day or night, their feet in water up to their ankles, eating only once in every twenty-four hours the provisions prepared during the night four kilometres away, and undergoing without a pause this frightful and murderous racket.

NEAR YPRES,
NOVEMBER 28TH.

At the moment, wonderful to relate! we are twenty kilometres behind the lines, having a rest for three or four days. This is something that has not happened to us before since the very beginning of the campaign! We are certainly making the most of it, stuffing ourselves with good food and good wine and regaining as much strength as possible in order to use it up again right away in new battles. They withdrew us from the firing line four days ago on the east front of Ypres, where we had ourselves relieved the English, and they are reorganising us here with recruits whom we take into our ranks and by promotions and appointments, and from the wounded who returned cured from the rear and in every way they can—and then they will do whatever they like with us, sending us back into the Belgian trenches, or shipping us off perhaps to some new zone of fighting. The attempt on Ypres has been a failure for the

Boches. We wonder if they are going to try another or whether if, through fear of the Russians, they are going to decide at last to take away their men from the French front where during four months they have accumulated such formidable resources.

This rest, as you will understand from my earlier letter, we have fairly earned. The month of November was the most terrible of the campaign; we have had bloody battles on every side. My division, which had been brought here in autos, was used to reinforce every part of the front as fast as the formidable attacks of the Boches against Ypres developed. Our battalions, on account of their well-known steadiness, were called and recalled, sent hither and thither, to attack, to defend, to take trenches, to retake them, to organise them or to give an example of stoical calm under a bombardment. One day one of my companies, without firing a gun, lost seventy-six men in its trench, their backs bent beneath the shells which must be endured "just the same," ready to stay to the last man, in that trench which their orders were not to give up and from which after nightfall the survivors were still able to repulse a violent attack. That's modern warfare! Twice my battalion has lost half of its members and has had its ranks refilled by reinforcements from the rear, but everywhere it has received the congratulations and thanks of the chiefs under

whose orders it has momentarily been placed. All that is both beautiful and sad at the same time. Then, when the ferocity of the fighting had slackened a little, the cold came, with three or four nights of heavy frost, and against that new trial they have once more valiantly held their ground. Day and night we hear over our heads the hissing whistle of enormous shells flying towards Ypres, wicked, savage and incendiary. And the other day in crossing the city at dawn in order to get around here we saw the horrible devastation which nothing can justify and which nothing can ever excuse. Ah, what savages they are, but what redoubtable and terrible fighters! When shall we "have them" for good! . . .

Here are some passages from the letters of General X, commanding an army corps, who also writes from the front:

OCTOBER 20TH.

My confidence is complete. The struggle will be long, but we shall have entire success. . . . I have spoken to you, I think, of that colonel, an officer of the Legion of Honour, who enlisted as an ordinary soldier at more than sixty years of age. I have in my corps a second lieutenant sixty-one years old whose son has been killed, and many other officers who are volunteers, who no longer owed any service to the army. At their side there

are mere children, "the little warriors of France." Yesterday I saw a little chap of fourteen, dressed in uniform, marching proudly between two troopers. These children, in the costumes which have been gotten up for them, with their sabre-bayonets at their sides, look absurd, or rather they bring the tears to your eyes. It is eleven o'clock at night. I have just ordered an attack to take one of the enemy's positions which I have overwhelmed all day long with the fire of twenty batteries. Poor village! What devastation! So wills the safety of the country. But how happy those parts of the country which are away from the field of operations should consider themselves. I have seen so many families fleeing and carrying away hurriedly pathetic bundles or carts loaded with clothes and all sorts of things. Ah, but this war is terrible. They bring into it an unbelievable ferocity, the result of the barbarism of these people who push their mania to the point of pretending to arrogate to themselves the control of everything that thinks or works. But their tone and their attitude are changing; fortune no longer smiles on them; the ship is leaking.

OCTOBER 29TH.

I assure you that everybody from the most modest combatant to the Generalissimo will have a right to the victor's crown, for our successes are due to the bravery of these brave little troopers.

They pass days and nights in the trenches within fifty yards of the enemy, exchanging shots continuously, or marching gaily to the assault and sometimes falling without a complaint.

I have just been to see an officer who was severely wounded. He was smiling. He said to me, "We've got that trench all right, haven't we, General? I told my comrades to avenge me. Good-bye, for a while."

How can one help having confidence in such troops!

NOVEMBER 10TH.

Heaven knows if I ever expected a war like this, a regular mole trap. We have to fight not only against the enemy but against the cold. I try in a thousand different ways to keep my men in good health. What cares I have! You must look after everything: hygiene, clothes, food, hospitals. It is a very great responsibility to lead troops into action. We take many precautions to avoid bronchitis, for we must not increase too much the number of your clients. Ah, if we could only call the nurses into the lines to carry away the wounded. But we are afraid of the shells and none of them must be allowed to show themselves around here. In order to harden our young soldiers little by little, I keep them behind the lines in places where they have nothing to fear. I shall begin very soon to send them to the front. In

that way we always have strong forces. Let us go forward, therefore, full of confidence.

NOVEMBER 16TH.

You must spend yourself here like a vigorous young man. I can assure you that those who come out of this will have given proof of strong constitutions. In the first battle a shell burst two or three metres above my head, wounding two officers of my staff and killing two horses. At other times they have burst in front or behind without doing any harm to those around me. Three days ago it was infernal; they rained on us from every side. One single shell killed thirty-eight artillery horses. The men have been superb; they have stood undisturbed under this deluge of iron and fire. What brave fellows they are! And it is touching to see how their hearts beat as one; how the French nation has gotten hold of itself again. In spite of all this anguish, truly this war is a "splendid ordeal." It will leave France strong and regenerated, as we all long for her to be.

SISTER GABRIELLE'S CHRISTMAS TREE

DECEMBER 26th, 1914.—In these days of deep sorrow the unchangeable church invites us to celebrate, not the agony of Cal-

vary, but the gay holiday of Christmas. What, celebrate that blessed holiday of intimate pleasures and of sweet memories in these times of anxiety, of troubles and of cruel separation! Yes, Christmas is ever the same. Christmas which comes again in the shimmering starry night to recall to the earth that everlasting promise which through all the centuries since the dawn of the first Christmas day shall comfort every sorrow. That blessed word is everywhere.

It was Christmas in those houses of mourning which gained an hour of respite from the thought that heaven, where now the souls of the well beloved are living, draws near to-day through the coming of the Child.

It was Christmas in the trenches toward which our hearts were turned with such strength and fervour that a perfume of anxious tenderness must have floated that evening in the air of France around those beloved soldiers. They had not our churches,

alas, but above their heads in the broad, open sky their eyes could look for the shining star.

It was Christmas in all our hospitals and in Sister Gabrielle's ward. The evening of the 25th was spent around a splendid tree wonderfully decorated. A number of little girls, the nurses of to-morrow, full of the desire to make themselves useful but still too young to be admitted regularly to the hospital, had been working outside for their beloved wounded. They brought us quantities of their own work and of the results of their collections.

"Ah, those children," Sister Gabrielle said to me one day as she watched them leaving the hospital, carrying without the least embarrassment huge bundles of red trousers to be mended, "those children without knowing it are creating a new generation which will be moulded by life itself in its highest expression; by daily sacrifice, by living close to heroism, by the control and forgetful-

ness of self in the midst of unutterable emotion."

The Sister was only too glad to let all that eager young life come to the ceremony of "the tree." Happy and eager, they entered like the fresh spring into that long room where there was always suffering in spite of the holiday atmosphere. The smiles of the invalids followed them. At the very end of the room between the two rows of white beds stood the tree. It was a stately spruce sent from the mountains especially for our wounded. Its branches bent gently under the weight of numberless mysterious packages. Gold and silver stars glittered through the branches, along which flowed tricolour ribbons, those beloved ribbons, the sight of which brings tears to our eyes. In the middle at the very end of the two largest branches were fastened two French flags. When you touched the trunk the flags waved. You might have said that our spruce itself waved them at the ends of its

outstretched arms for some mysterious signal to those other flags which fly over our battlefields. At the very bottom, hidden among the thickest branches, a little, a very little plaster Christ Child, whom you had to look hard to find, slept sheltered by a mass of tri-colour ribbon. The child Jesus, with the three colours of France for its cradle, is that not something to dream about?

As the evening fell, toward four o'clock, Sister Gabrielle ordered the long windows closed. Thereupon the many-coloured balls hung on the tree became alive and grew transparent and luminous. The dark green branches grew darker still and the red of our flags flamed out against them. Then the mysterious spirit of Christmas came down all around. It illuminated with its indefinable charm the presents hung on the table laden with mandarins and the traditional nougat, and indeed the whole atmosphere. Two orderlies carried in on a cot the "darling" of

the room, a little volunteer from Bar-le-duc, who answered proudly when he was complimented for his ardour, "But at home *all the young men of eighteen* have gone. You don't meet one in the town."

To-day he is blushing and confused by the honour being done him, for it is he who is going to draw the numbers. They settle him as comfortably as possible with a chair on which to rest his wounded leg. All the men who are able to get up surround him, their heads bandaged, their arms in slings, limping along on crutches or the shoulder of a comrade. From the beds pathetic heads are raised in order to see better. The ceremonies begin. The system is very simple. The numbers contained in the bag correspond to the hospital numbers of the men and those whose numbers were first drawn choose first. From one end of the room to the other they went back and forth to describe to those who were in bed the look, the size and the shape of the packages. After

they have heard these details they consider, occasionally for a long time, and give their orders, which are immediately executed. The lucky ones who were on their feet, carefully make the round of the tree, again and again, before deciding, as if it were a question of very serious moment. The pleasure of all these veterans was very touching. By a tender memory they found again that evening the feeling they had as children. A fictitious number marked with the name of the surgeon of the room suddenly came out. There just at that moment was Dr. X, gay and kind as always. The men feel great admiration and affection for him, which is well deserved, because his untiring devotion is as great as his scientific skill. He graciously accepted a box of caramels and at his request one of the young girls passed it around the room.

An adjutant whose bed was far away, claimed when his turn came, the honour of having one of the flags. Boisset confided to

me his satisfaction at being the last one called. "It's the least we can do, to give our dear wounded the first choice," he said.

The directors of the hospital arrived in the midst of the distribution of the presents. Behind them we saw, to our great surprise, a little harmonium pushed by vigorous arms, and with it a whole choir of soldiers. Sister Lucy, the accompanist, was summoned. She took her place; the uniforms were grouped around her white headdress and in front of the glowing tree we sang once more the old French carols.

> People, on your knees, await your deliverance.

That command to hope and pray chanted by the fine, serious voice of a singer whose head was bandaged, awoke the far echoes of the room over which a tense and profound silence had spread. But as the songs followed one another we could hear from some of the beds, here and there, the sound of

stifled sobs. They are gay, really, our simple old songs! But to-day their gaiety stirred in our hearts too many memories of past Christmases, from those which we celebrated as children in the abandonment of careless happiness, to the later ones, even to that of last year. That one was perhaps made up of the happiness of other children, grown up around us; it was filled anyway with the inexpressible sweetness of home. Two of the invalids were affected in a particularly harrowing way. It was because they suffered with an agony for which we shall never have pity enough. They came from the regions that have been invaded and they did not know what had become of their wives and children. The little girls, who were brought into the hospital room for the first time yesterday, were completely overcome by the tears of these men. They came to me to say, in a slightly horrified tone, that Sister Gabrielle had said that they should not try to comfort them. She would

talk to them herself later on, but she was sure, that for the time being, it was better to leave them alone. Sister Gabrielle was right. She knew well that at certain times there are griefs that cannot be comforted.

During that day of respite when the severe rules of the hospital bowed before the gentle Christmas time, in front of that tree of memories, in that softening family atmosphere, we could not but let them weep freely, these fathers, husbands and children who suddenly saw near them again the longed-for vision of their threatened homes. Ever since the manger at Bethlehem no doubt men have wept at the feet of the new-born babe whose divine hand consoles and lifts up sorrowing hearts. No, we must say nothing. No one should try to come between human sorrow and the child who is to suffer on the cross, for since that night the bond is beyond our understanding. Let the very tears of our soldiers help us pray for those dreadful troubles that we see

and for the other more hidden ones which weigh on our souls. To-morrow when the great windows open again to the cold air of December we shall take up once more with greater courage after to-day's tears, our customary life and our self-control. To-morrow, Sister Gabrielle, who has seemed to see nothing, will remember, as if by a miracle, those beds where so many tears have been shed. She will bend those quivering white wings over them for a few moments and will say words of strength and consolation. To-morrow the blessed Christmas day will be over, of course, but the tree stripped of its garlands and presents, will still hold the tri-colour ribbons and also hidden in its lowest branches, the divine child, who stretches out his arms. Sister Gabrielle still has that silent and eloquent sermon; the child of sacrifice under the colours of that France for which we must be ready to give all and even to die; that is what she leaves before the eyes of the soldiers.

But their thoughts and ours also can rise beyond, even higher than the hardships of the stable and of the present moment. This Jesus who smiles in the straw of the manger and who is willing through love to become the God of the Crucifixion, is also the God of the Resurrection. The feast of His coming has given to humanity a radiant thought. To truly celebrate that anniversary we must know how to hear beyond the days of sadness the distant Alleluia. The true Christmas of Christian souls is at all times the feast of hope.

THE END

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: MAY 2001
PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 007 675 758 6